De Wilde pinxt. Leney sculp

Mrs ESTEN as LADY FLUTTER.

Then I'll stay to vex you.

London. Printed for J. Bell British Library Strand March 30. 1793.

THE DISCOVERY,

A

COMEDY,

By Mrs. FRANCES SHERIDAN.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRES-ROYAL,

DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOKS,
By Permission of the Managers.

The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation.

LONDON:

Printed for the Proprietors, under the Direction of

JOHN BELL, British-Library, STRAND,

Bookseller to His Royal Highness the PRINCE of WALES.

MDCCXCIX.

De Wilde pinx.

Long sc.

WESTSIDE LANDSCAPE.

Pray Sir stay to see your

London Printed for J. Bell, Oxford Arms, Warwick Lane, 1777.

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THE DISCOVERY

WAS the work of Mrs. FRANCES SHERIDAN, an author of very exquisite talents, from which, no doubt, in some measure, are derived the abilities, yet more extraordinary, of her son. Indeed this family has been remarkable for very great genius in most of its branches.

The DISCOVERY is rather a novel than a comedy —it has no incident that can surprise, and the dialogue is languid, and the sentences loose—they have none of the terse manner so necessary for the stage.

Yet talents like those of the author, applied even to a pursuit unfavourable for their exertion, leave some stamp of their value. The design of that "maiden "man at arms," Sir ANTHONY BRANVILLE, who treats a woman like a divinity, is excellent:—

Ling'ring he loves, from listless day to day,
And puffs his flame of sentiment away.

The FLUTTERS are also well imagined, and worked up with more comic effect than the rest of the comedy.

PROLOGUE.

A Female culprit at your bar appears,
Not destitute of hope, nor free from fears.
Her utmost crime she's ready to confess,
A simple trespass——neither more nor less;
For, truant-like, she rambled out of bounds,
And dar'd to venture on poetic grounds.

The fault is deem'd high treason by the men,
Those lordly tyrants who usurp the pen!
Then try the vile monopoly to hide
With flattering arts,—"You, ladies, have beside
"So many ways to conquer—sure, 'tis fit
"You leave to us that dangerous weapon, wit!"
For women, like state criminals, they think,
Should be debarr'd the use of pen and ink.

Our author, who disclaims such partial laws,
To her own sex appeals to judge her cause.
She pleads old magna charta on her side,
That British subjects by their peers be try'd.

Ladies, to you she dedicates her lays,
Assert your right to censure or to praise;
Nor doubt a sentence by such lips decreed,
Firm as the laws of Persian or of Mede:
Boldly your will in open court declare,
And let the men dispute it if they dare!

Our humble scenes no charms of art can boast,
But simple nature, and plain sense at most:
Perhaps some character—a moral too—
And, what is stranger still—the story's new:
No borrow'd thoughts throughout the piece are shewn,
But what our author writes is all her own.

By no sly hint, or incident, she tries
To bid on modest cheeks the blush arise:
The loosest thoughts our decent scenes suggest,
Virtue herself might harbour in her breast;
And where our harmless satire vents its spleen,
The soberest prude may laugh without a screen.
But not to mirth alone we claim your ear,
Some tender scenes demand the melting tear;
The comic dame, her different powers to prove,
Gives you the dear variety you love;
Sometimes assumes her graver sister's art,
Borrows her form, and tries to touch the heart.
But fancy's pictures float upon the brain,
And short-liv'd o'er the heart is passion's reign;
Till judgement stamp her sanction on the whole,
And sink th' impression deep into the soul.

Dramatis Personæ.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

Lord MEDWAY, - - - - - - Mr. Aickin.
Sir ANTHONY BRANVILLE, - - Mr. Henderson.
Sir HARRY FLUTTER, - - - - Mr. Lewis.
Colonel MEDWAY, *son to Lord* Medway, Mr. Wroughton.

Women.

Lady MEDWAY, - - - - - - - Mrs. Webb.
Lady FLUTTER, *niece to Sir* Anthony, Mrs. Abington,
Mrs. KNIGHTLY, *a young Widow*, - Mrs. Mattocks.
Miss RICHLY, *her sister*, - - - - Mrs. S. Kemble.
LOUISA, *daughter to Lord* Medway, - Miss Morris.

THE DISCOVERY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Library. Lord MEDWAY *reading at a Table. Enter Lady* MEDWAY.

Lord Medway.

How's this, madam? pursue me into my study? my sanctuary? I thought this place, at least, was to be considered by your ladyship as inviolable.

Lady Med. I hope I don't interrupt you, my dear.

Lord Med. I should be glad, Lady Medway, that we remember'd our respective bounds; I never intrude at your tea-table, or toilet; and I desire my hours of retirement may be held as sacred by you.

Lady Med. I beg your pardon, my lord, but indeed you have made me so exceedingly unhappy, by this sudden resolution you have taken, in regard to marrying your daughter, that I can find rest no where.

" *Lord Med.* And so you are come, like the evil " spirit, to take possession of me, in order to make

" me as restless as yourself. I am really extremely
" obliged to your ladyship; but you must know,
" ma'am, I am of so strange a disposition, that I have
" an absolute dislike to the being made uneasy;
" and therefore shall take it as a favour, if you will
" either at once cheerfully acquiesce in what I have
" determined, or else go, and display your plaintive
" eloquence to some one better disposed to sympa-
" thise with you than I am.

" *Lady Med.* My lord, you know your will has ever
" been a law to me; but I beg of you to consider the
" cruelty of forcing young people to marry against
" their inclinations."

Lord Med. Madam, I did not expect this idle opposition from you, especially when you know my motives to this marriage.

Lady Med. My lord, you have not yet explained them to me; I can only guess at large.

Lord Med. You know I am harrassed with debts, and I now tell you, I don't know where to raise five hundred pounds more, if it would save me from perdition; and pray, let me ask your ladyship, do you know any one besides Sir Anthony Branville, who will take your daughter without a fortune? for I neither am, nor probably ever shall be, able to give her one.

Lady Med. But Louisa is very young, my lord; why need we be so precipitate? Besides, if this match between Mrs. Knightly and your son should take

place, it will then be in your power to provide for your daughter.

Lord Med. Right woman!—a hint is but just started, and you pursue, run it down, and seize it at once. I have not yet proposed the thing to my son. Perhaps he may not like the lady when I do; and I presume you will think his inclinations as proper to be consulted as those of the young lady his sister.

Lady Med. Certainly, my lord.

Lord Med. Oh, no doubt on't; love-matches against the world! "All you ladies, in this particular, are "very ready to adhere to that Christian precept, of "doing as you would be done by:" and so I suppose, you, out of your maternal fondness, would recommend it to me to let miss please herself in the choice of a husband, as her mama did before her.

Lady Med. That reproach from you, my lord, is not kind—but I do not desire you to let her please herself in choosing one she likes, only do not force her to take one she hates.

Lord Med. Has she told you that she hates Sir Anthony?

Lady Med. Not in express words; but the repugnance she shews——

Lord Med. Perhaps she loves some one else.

Lady Med. To tell you the truth, my lord, I believe she does.

"*Lord Med.* And she has made you the confidant "of her tender passion.

"*Lady Med.* I extorted something like a confession "of this sort from her."

Lord Med. And pray, who may be the happy man?

Lady Med. Young Branville, Sir Anthony's nephew, who is now on his travels, and is expected every day home.

Lord Med. A forward little gipsey——"This is the "curse of marrying early, to have our children tug- "ging at our purse-strings, at a time when we have "as quick a relish for the joys of life as they have, "and ten times a better capacity for pursuing them." —Look'ye, madam, I cannot give her a shilling; Sir Anthony is ready to take her as she is; and if they should have a family, is able to provide liberally for them all. On the contrary, if she follows her own soft inclinations, in marrying Mr. Branville, I suppose, in three or four years, I should have the pleasure of seeing myself a grand papa to two or three pretty little beggars, who, between their mother's vanity, and their father's poverty, may happen to continue so all their lives.

Lady Med. But, my lord, as Sir Anthony has sent his nephew abroad at his own expence, it looks as if he meant to do something handsome for him: besides, he is his uncle's heir, in case he should die without children by marriage.

Lord Med. And so you think you can keep him in a state of celibacy, by refusing him your daughter ——Oh fye, Lady Medway, I never heard you argue so weakly. Sir Anthony is not yet past the prime of life; besides, he has owned to me that it was his being discarded by Mrs. Knightly, which made him resolve, at once in a sort of pique, to marry the first girl

that fell in his way; birth and reputation being all the fortune he desired with her. A man thus circumstanced is very little likely to continue a batchelor—No, no; I'll take him in the humour, and secure him while I may.

Lady Med. Before it be too late, my lord, let me once more beseech you to reflect on the misery of a married life, where on either side love or esteem is wanting. Have we not a glaring instance of this in the house with us, in Sir Harry Flutter and his wife? are they not as wretched a pair as ever met in wedlock, perpetually quarrelling! I own, I almost repent my invitation to them, and wish them fairly back again in the country.

Lord Med. That must not be. [*Aside.*] You have made a very unlucky choice in your example, ma'am; a foolish boy, and a giddy girl, that know not either of them what they would be at. He married the wife his mother chose for him, to get rid of his tutor; and she took the husband her wise father provided for her, to escape from a boarding-school. What can be expected from two such simpletons? He, proud of the authority of a husband, exercises it from the same principle, and with pretty much the same capacity, that children shew with regard to poor little animals that are in their power, in teasing and controlling them; and this he thinks makes him look manly.

Lady Med. So I imagine, for I have heard him say, he does no more than other husbands.

Lord Med. She, on the other hand, fancies the prerogatives of a wife consist in contradicting and opposing him; and this, I presume, she thinks is doing like other wives; but my life for it, when they know a little more of the world, they will be very happy.

Lady Med. Never in each other, I am afraid, my lord.

" *Lord Med.* And pray, ma'am, let me ask you, what " mighty felicity have you enjoyed, in being married " to the man of your choice?

" *Lady Med.* This is a strange question, my lord! " I never complained of my lot; but if I have not " been completely happy, it is not owing to any fault " of mine.

" *Lord Med.* Is may be mine for aught I know—— " but I only mention it, to shew you that love is not " such an almighty deity, as to confer happiness " without certain ingredients besides, that I could " name.

" *Lady Med.* My lord, where it is reciprocal, there " wants not much besides.

" *Lord Med.* Be sure you preach that wise doctrine " to your daughter; it will become your prudence, " and no doubt will be extremely agreeable to her " pretty romantic notions."——But, pr'ythee, let us have done with the subject at once. One circumstance more, however, I shall acquaint you with; if the marriage between Medway and this lady should be accomplished, I have other purposes to appropriate her fortune to, than buying a husband for your daughter

——But this is only in speculation—the thing may never happen——for nothing but the last extremity should compel me to urge my son against his inclination. In regard to Louisa, in two words, I will be obeyed: do me the favour to tell her as much. I shall see her presently, and expect such an answer from her, as her duty shall dictate.

Lady Med. My lord, it is an unpleasing task you have assign'd me, but I will obey you. [*Exit.*

Lord Med. [*Looking after her.*] That you have always done, so much praise I will allow you—but I am out of humour with every thing. If this boy should dislike the match, I am undone at once; and I fear, from some hints I have lately received, I shall find an obstacle in the way which will not easily be removed——"'Sdeath! what a thing it is to have po-
" verty staring a man in the face, and no way to keep
" the horrid spectre from laying hold on you!—No
" way but one; it all depends on Medway's filial
" duty"——A thousand vexations crowd upon me together—'Tis a pretty time for a man to think of intriguing! and yet the blooming beauty of that little madcap, with all her childishness about her, has caught such hold on me, that I must have her—Oh, with what alacrity now could I pursue the chace, if my thoughts were a little more disengaged!——She has been complaining to my wife of her husband's ill usage of her; and he, I suppose, will come to me presently, to take a lesson, as he calls it, to enable

him to use her worse——he sha'n't want my assistance——and here he comes to receive it.

SCENE II.

Enter Sir HARRY FLUTTER.

Sir H. Flut. Oh, my dear lord.

Lord Med. Why you seem out of breath, Sir Harry; what is the matter?

Sir H. Flut. Upon my soul, my lord, I have been so stunn'd this morning, with the din of conjugal interrogatories, that I am quite bated——do let me lounge a little on this couch of yours.

Lord Med. What, I suppose you were playing the rogue last night.

Sir H. Flut. No, faith, only at the tavern. I was at home before three o'clock, and yet my wife was such an unreasonable little devil, as to ask me forty questions about my staying out so late.

Lord Med. It's the way of them all——but I hope you are too well acquainted with your own prerogative, to give her any satisfaction on those accounts.

Sir H. Flut. Satisfaction! oh, catch me at that, and sacrifice me—no, no——But pray now, my lord, how would you behave on such an occasion? for I should be very glad to find that my conduct squared with yours.

Lord Med. Why—not roughly—you know that is not my way—it is not manly; besides, it would at

once provoke, and justify your wife in her resentment.——But there is a sort of sneering, ironical treatment, that I never knew fail of nettling a woman to the quick; and the best of it is, the thing won't bear repetition; for let them deliver your very words, without the tone and air accompanying them, and there shall not appear the least harm in them.

Sir H. Flut. Ay, that, that's the secret I want to come at; that's the true art of tormenting, and what of all the talents your lordship possesses, I envy you for the most——Heavens, how I have seen my lady swell, and tears start into her eyes, when, devil take me, if I thought you were not in perfect good humour all the while—Now I am rather petulant, flash, flash, flash, as quick as lightning, till I put myself into a confounded passion, when I only meant to vex her—Though I think I was rather temperate too, this morning.

Lord Med. How was it; let's hear?

Sir H. Flut. Why, I came home at three o'clock, as I told you, a little tipsey too, by the bye; but what was that to her, you know; for I am always good-humoured in my cups. To bed I crept, as softly as a mouse, for I had no more thoughts of quarrelling with her then, than I have now with your lordship——La, says she, with a great heavy sigh, it is a sad thing that one must be disturbed in this manner; and on she went, mutter, mutter, mutter, for a quarter of an hour; I all the while lying as quiet as a lamb, without making her a word of an answer; at

last, quite tired of her perpetual buzzing in my ear, pr'ythee be quiet, Mrs. Wasp, says I, and let me sleep (I was not thoroughly awake when I spoke). Do so, Mr. Drone, grumbled she, and gave a great flounce. I said no more, for in two minutes I was as fast as a top. Just now, when I came down to breakfast, she was seated at the tea-table all alone, and looked so neat, and so cool, and so pretty, that e'gad, not thinking of what had passed, I was going to give her a kiss; when up she toss'd her demure little face, you were a pretty fellow last night, Sir Harry, says she. So I am every night, I hope, ma'am, says I, making her a very low bow. Was not that something in your manner, my lord?

Lord Med. Oh, very well, very well——

Sir H. Flut. Pray where were you till that unconscionable hour? says she. At the tavern, drinking, says I, very civilly. And who was with you, sir? Oh, thought I, I'll match you for your enquiries; I nam'd your lordship, and half a dozen more wild fellows (whom, by the way, I had not so much as seen), and two or three girls of the town, added I, whistling, and looking another way———

Lord Med. That was rather a little, though but a little, too much.

Sir H. Flut. Down she slapp'd her cup and saucer; if this be the case, Sir Harry (half sobbing), I shall desire a separate bed. That's as I please, madam, sticking my hand in my side, and looking her full in the face. No, it shall be as I please, sir——it sha'n't,

madam; it shall, sir; and it sha'nt and it shall, and it shall and it sha'n't, was bandied backwards and forwards, till we were both out of breath with passion. At last she said something to provoke me; I don't know what it was, but I answer'd her a little tartly. You would not have said it, I believe——I'd give the world for your command of temper—but it slipp'd out, faith——

Lord Med. What was it?

Sir H. Flut. Why, I said (for she vexed me cursedly), I said—faith, I think I—as good as told her she ly'd.

Lord Med. Oh, fye!

Sir H. Flut. She burst out a crying, I kick'd down the tea-table, and away I scamper'd up to you lordship, to receive advice and consolation.

Lord Med. Why, really, Sir Harry, I pity you; to be ty'd to such a little termagant is the devil; but 'tis the fortune of wedlock. One thing I have always observed; the more a husband submits, the more a wife tyrannizes. 'Twas my own case at first; but I was soon obliged to alter my course, and by exerting myself a little, I brought Lady Medway to be as well-behaved, I think, as any woman of quality in town.

Sir H. Flut. So she is, upon my word, my lord; I'd change with you with all my heart, if my lady were a little younger. Duce take me, but I wish we were like the Spartans; I assure you, if their laws were in force here, my wife should be at your service, and I dare say I should be as welcome to yours.

Lord Med. Oh, undoubtedly, Sir Harry!

Sir H. Flut. The women would like it vastly——— your wife and mine I mean.

Lord Med. How do you know that?

Sir H. Flut. Why I know mine does not care sixpence for me, and I suppose it may be pretty much the same with yours, and with all of them for that matter.

Lord Med. That doesn't follow—But how do you intend to act with regard to Lady Flutter? I suppose this little breach will be made up like all the rest.

Sir H. Flut. Not by me, I assure you, my lord; I don't intend to speak to her to-day; and when I do, she shall ask my pardon before I forgive her.

Lord Med. Poh, that's children's play, fall out, and then pray, pray, kiss and be friends. No, Sir Harry, if you would shew yourself a man, and a husband, let her see that you despise her little girlish petulance, by taking no farther notice of it. Now, were I in your case, I'd behave just as if nothing at all had happened. If she pouts, smile; and ask her how she likes your new sword-knot, or the point in your ruffles, or any other idle question. You know she must give you an answer. If it be a peevish one, laugh in her face, take up your hat, and wish her a good morning; if, on the contrary, she speaks with good-humour, seem not to hear her, but walk about the room, repeating verses. Then, as if you had not observed her before, Did you speak to me, Lady Flutter? but without waiting for her reply, slide out of

the room, humming a tune——Now all this, you see, where she to relate it, will not have the appearance of ill treatment; and yet, my life for yours, it humbles her more than all the blustering airs you could put on.

Sir H. Flut. I am sure you are right, my lord. The case is plain; but the difficulty is in executing the thing properly, I am so warm in my temper. Oh, what would I give for your glorious cool sneer of contempt!——I'll try for it positively; and, 'egad, I'll now go to her and make the experiment; and so, my lord, adieu for the present, and thanks for this lesson.

Lord Med. Sir Harry! do you dine at home to-day?

Sir H. Flut. I don't know how that may be till I have reconnoitred; your lordship, I know, does not —— and I hate to dine alone with the women.

Lord Med. Oh, I shall certainly be at home soon after dinner, for I shall long to know on what terms you and my lady may be by that time.

Sir H. Flut. Oh, Heaven knows——we may be at cuffs by that time, perhaps; but I shall be in the way.

[*Exit Sir* Harry.

Lord Med. If he follows my advice, I think she must hate him heartily—and then I step in as her comforter —But I have other business to mind at present—so many projects on foot without a certainty of accomplishing one of them———Zounds, if I had not the firmness of a Stoic, I should beat my own brains out.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Changes to a Chamber. Enter Lady MEDWAY *and* LOUISA.

Lady Med. My dear, it afflicts me as much as it does you; but you know your papa is absolute; I wish, therefore, you would endeavour to reconcile yourself to Sir Anthony.

Lou. Indeed, madam, it is impossible! If my heart were ever so much at liberty, it never could endure that forbidden man.

Lady Med. But, child, you are too much governed by fancy;——though he is not quite in the bloom of youth, yet he is far from being disagreeable. What is it you so much dislike in him?

Lou. Dear madam! sure the pomp and strange turn of his phrases, and the solemnity of his manner, is almost ridiculous.

Lady Med. He is rather formal, I allow you.

Lou. And then his notions of love so extravagant, his address so romantic, nothing but flames and raptures in his mouth, and, according to my brother's account of him, he has no more real warmth than a marble statue.

Lady Med. You find he loved Mrs. Knightly.

Lou. His peculiarities diverted her, madam, and she indulged him in them——I am told he used to sigh at her feet for half a day, and if he committed the smallest fault, she would impose a penance on

him, which Sir Anthony always received as a mark of favour.

Lady Med. I am sorry, my dear, it is not more agreeable to you; for I am commissioned to tell you, positively, you must accept of him for a husband.

Lou. But, madam, he has never spoken a word to me on the subject—I have seen him but a few times, and—in short, I cann't bear him.

Lady Med. Shall I tell your papa what you say? he, no doubt, will be perfectly satisfied with this determination.

Lou. Dear madam! sure you will not. Save me from my papa's anger; you know I dare not open my heart to him. You (except in your maternal tenderness) are more like a companion to me than a parent. The authority of the mother is melted down in the kindness of the friend; my papa's severity had else been insupportable.

Lady Med. Louisa, you are not to give so harsh a name to your father's solicitude for your happiness. He is not to be shaken in his resolution. I have already exerted my utmost influence over him, and that I am sorry to say is less, much less, than it ought to be.——Hist!—I hear your father's voice below; he is coming up to you. I beg, my dear, you will let him see by your obedience, that my interposition has had its proper effect. I'll give you the opportunity to talk to him alone.

Lou. Dear madam, don't leave me—my papa is so stern.

Lady Med. I go to avoid ungrateful appeals from him. Consent with a good grace, Louisa, for 'tis certain you have no choice left. [*Exit Lady* Medway.

Lou. Heavens, what will become of me!

[*She stands musing.*

SCENE IV.

Lord MEDWAY *enters, stops at the door, and looks at her, she not observing him.*

Lord Med. [*Repeating affectedly.*]

On every hill, in every grove,
Along the margin of each stream,
Dear conscious scenes of former love——
I mourn, and Damon is my theme.

What is your pretty tender heart ruminating upon? your Damon, I suppose—were not you thinking of Mr. Branville?

Lou. No, my lord.

Lord Med. I believe you don't tell truth, my lady—look up, girl——Ah, Louisa, Louisa, that conscious blush! but 'tis well you have the grace to be ashamed.

Lou. My lord, if I do blush, I am not conscious of any cause, unless the fear of offending you.

Lord Med. Pretty innocent!—all obedience too, I warrant. I hate hypocrisy from my very soul; you know that you are a rebel in the bottom of your heart. Speak honestly now, would not you run away with Branville this very night, if it were in your power?

Lou. My lord, I—I—

Lord Med. My lord, I—I—, speak out, mistress.

Lou. If I had your permission, my lord, I own I should be—inclined to prefer him to—any other.

Lord Med. Thou prevaricating monkey—dissemblers too from the very egg. And without my permission, miss; what answer does your modesty and filial piety suggest to that?

Lou. That without it, I will never marry any one.

Lord Med. I don't believe one syllable of that; but I take you at your word; and now I tell you that you never shall have it to marry *him*—How does your love-sick heart relish that?

Lou. My lord, I am resigned to your pleasure.

[*She curtsies and offers to go, he bows and lets her walk to the door.*

Lord Med. Now, ma'am—walk back if you please—for I have not done with you yet. [*She comes back.*] "—Whither were you swimming with that sweet "languishing air, like an Arcadian princess?

"*Lou.* I was going to my chamber, my lord, if "you had not forbid it.

"*Lord Med.* Forbid! fie, what an ungenteel word to "use towards a heroine in romance! There are some "surly fathers, indeed, who take those liberties with "their children; but I, who know breeding better, "only intreat; and therefore, ma'am, beg the favour "of your company a little longer; if a mind digni-"fied by the noble passion of love, can condescend to "the admonitions of a parent.—" What does the fool

hang her head for? Sit down there—What, you are going to faint, I hope—Oh, I d—i—e! I ex-*pire*—Branville, take my last adieu—Here, Betty, some hartshorn for the despairing nymph, quickly—your lady is dying for love.—So, so, so, the sluice is let out at last.——

So lillies look surcharg'd with morning dew!

You really look very pretty when you cry, Louisa, I had a mind to see how it would become you.

Lou. Indeed, my lord, you are too hard upon me.

Lord Med. How now, mistress! how dare you speak thus? What do you call a hardship? Love makes some timorous animals bold, they say; it makes women so with a vengeance.

Lou. My lord, I beg your permission to withdraw.

Lord Med. Stay where you are, madam.—When I condescend to talk with you, methinks you ought to know, 'tis your duty to attend to what I have to say. You know my mind already in regard to young Branville.—" Ay, sigh on—fie, fie, do those glowing " aspirations become a young lady educated as you " have been? Your mother, I am sure, has always " set you a good example. I was no pattern for you " to follow."——But observe what I say; I forbid you to think, but even to think, of Branville. That is the first, and perhaps the hardest part of my command. The next is, that you resolve immediately to accept of Sir Anthony for your husband. And now, miss, you may, if you please, retire to your chamber, and, in plaintive strains, either in verse or prose,

bemoan your hard fate; and be sure you complain to your waiting-woman what a tyrant you have to your father.—Go, get you gone. [*Exit* Louisa.] This is the plague of having daughters; no sooner out of their leading-strings than in love, forsooth.

SCENE V.

Enter Colonel MEDWAY.

Oh, George, I am glad you are come; that foolish girl has ruffled me so, I want relief from my own thoughts.

Col. Med. I met my sister in tears——I hope, my lord, she has done nothing to disoblige you.

Lord Med. Oh, a mere trifle—only confessed a passion for a fellow not worth sixpence, but what depends on the caprice of a relation, and, like a prudent as well as dutiful child, has shewn a thorough dislike of her father's choice.

Col. Med. My lord, she will consider better of it; I am sure my sister will willingly obey you in every thing.

Lord Med. To what purpose is a father's solicitude for the welfare of his children, if a perverse silly girl will counteract all his projects?—You, Medway, have ever shewn yourself an affectionate, as well as an obedient son, to a parent, who confesses himself, with regard to you, not one of the most provident—I wish I could make you amends.

Col. Med. My lord, the tenderness you have always shewn me, deserved every return I could make you.—I wish for no other amends but to see you easy in your mind and in your circumstances.

Lord Med. That's well said! but I expected as much from you. Suppose, now, that it were in your power to make me easy in both, and at the same time effectually to serve yourself.

Col. Med. I wish it were, my lord, you should see my readiness to embrace the opportunity—But I am afraid there is nothing now in my power.

Lord Med. Oh, you are mistaken, there are ways and means to retrieve all; and it was on this subject I wanted to talk with you—There is a certain lady of fortune, son—What! droop at the very mention of her? that's an ill omen.

Col. Med. My lord, I doubt my fortune never can be mended by those means.

Lord Med. No! Suppose the widow Knightly, with a real estate of three thousand a year, and a personal one of fifty thousand pounds, should have taken a fancy to you, would not that be a means?—You blush; perhaps you are already acquainted with the lady's passion.

Col. Med. My lord, I am glad to see you so pleasant.

Lord Med. I am serious, I assure you—Why, is there any thing so extraordinary in a woman's falling in love with a handsome young fellow?

Col. Med. My lord, if the lady has really done me

that honour, 'tis more than I deserve; for I never made the least advances.

Lord Med. Well; but how do you like her?

Col. Med. She is genteel, I think—I really never examined her features.

Lord Med. That's strange! Why, you visit her sometimes, I find.

Col. Med. I go to her house, my lord; but 'tis her younger sister whom I visit.

Lord Med. Humph—What sort of a damsel is she?

Col. Med. A most angelic creature.

Lord Med. Ay! then it seems you have examined her features?

Col. Med. My lord, I have known her long. Miss Richly, who, as well as her sister, was born abroad, was sent hither some years since for her education, and I became acquainted with her in the house of a friend of mine, with whom she lived. Mrs. Knightly, who had married an English merchant, was then settled at Lisbon, and knew but little of her sister till lately; when, having lost her husband, she came to England, and took the young lady under her own care.

Lord Med. So! I perceive you know their history.

Col. Med. I do, my lord. Poor Miss Richly's part of it is a melancholy one; for her father was so partial to his eldest daughter, that he left her by much the greatest portion of his estate; and what the youngest had to her share, she had the misfortune to

lose, by the breaking of a merchant, in whose hands her money lay.

Lord Med. You are better informed than I am, I find.——Well, but what do you think of Mrs. Knightly?

Col. Med. Think, my lord! I really don't know what to think. The lady is very deserving, but——

Lord Med. But! Oh those damned buts! Am I to be butted by you all, one after the other? There's your mother first, to be sure she is very ready to acquiesce in every thing that I approve, but she thinks it hard a young creature should have any force put on her inclinations, though it be for her own good—Then, Miss Louisa—she is all obedience and submission—but, alas! she has given away her heart already—And you, you too are perfectly disposed to oblige me; but you will choose for yourself, I presume, notwithstanding.

Col. Med. My lord, you really distress me, by entertaining the least doubt of that reverence I ever have borne towards you, and ever will bear; but in a case like this (pardon me, my lord,) I cannot at once give up all that I have now left, or can claim a right in the disposal of, my honour and my love—I own I love Miss Richly, have loved her long; and if virtue, beauty, and unaffected innocence, deserve a heart, my lord, she has a claim to mine, and is, I confess, entire mistress of it; yet I wish the evil (since it is one) had stopped there—but—

Lord Med. But what?

Col. Med. My lord, she loves me too.

Lord Med. I am sorry for it——Oh, son, son, a pretty face will not redeem our acres.

Col. Med. I never till now lamented her want of fortune, which I knew indeed from the beginning; but still hoped that I might one day be in a condition to support her as her own merit and my rank required. I even flattered myself that I should obtain your consent.

Lord Med. What! to marry a beggar, Medway?

Col. Med. I beg, my lord, you will not use so harsh a word. She is worthy of higher, much higher dignity, than ever I could raise her to.—What is a title, my lord, stripped as I am of every thing besides?

Lord Med. That reproach is ungenerous, Medway; but I have deserved it.

Col. Med. Forgive me, my lord, I meant it not as such.

Lord Med. If you had, I could forgive it—but we will say no more on the subject. I will not urge you on so tender a point.

Col. Med. My lord, I thank you.

Lord Med. Answer me but one question: are you under a promise to marry Miss Richly?

Col. Med. No, my lord, her generosity would not suffer her to let me bind myself by any other tie than that of inclination, as I insisted on her being free.

Lord Med. That's well—Then I do not see how your honour is so much concerned; as for your love, when I was of your age, Medway, I had so many

loves, that it was hard to tell which of them had the best claim.

Col. Med. My lord, you were so kind as to promise you would insist no farther on the subject.

Lord Med. Well, well, I have done—I'll detain you no longer. Some business calls me out at present; I shall see you in the evening.

Col. Med. My lord, I'll attend you. [*Bows, and exit.*

Lord Med. The firmness of this young man's virtue awes me. I know in point of interest with regard to himself at least, it will be impossible to prevail on him to think of this marriage—and the obligations he has already laid me under, will not suffer me to make, on my own account, so severe a trial of the tenderness and generosity of his heart—Let it go; I'll think no more of it. [*Exit.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Dressing-Room. *Sir.* HARRY FLUTTER, *as just dressed, a Servant attending.*

Sir H. Flutter.

Is your lady come in, can you tell?

Serv. My lady did not go out at all, sir.

Sir H. Flut. Not at all! Why, I understood she dined abroad.

Serv. No, sir; I believe she only ordered Mrs. Betty to say so for an excuse, because she had no mind to come down to dinner.

Sir H. Flut. Was that all?—Then do you step to her, and tell her I desire to speak with her—On very particular business, tell her. [*Exit Servant.*] Now to put my lesson in practice——If I can but hit on the manner—I'll pretend not to see her at first—But if she should not come now—'egad, that would discon-cert the whole plan——Yes, faith, here she is; her curiosity, nothing else I am sure, has brought her.

Enter Lady FLUTTER, *with Knetting in her Hand.*

Lady Flut. [*Sullenly.*] What do you want with me, Sir Harry?

Sir H. Flut. I want with you, Lady Flutter! I never wanted any thing with you in my life, that I know of.

Lady Flut. Why, didn't you send for me this minute, and say you had particular business? I should not have been so ready to come else, I assure you.

Sir H. Flut. [*Aside.*] 'Egad, I believe I am wrong at setting out; it should have all been done as if by chance. What shall I say to her now!——How do you like this suit of clothes, my dear? Don't you think it very elegant?

Lady Flut. Was that all the business you had with me? [*She offers to go.*

Sir H. Flut. Ma'am, I insist on your not going till you answer my question, just how you please now, civilly or uncivilly; I am prepared for either, I can tell you.

Lady Flut. And so, Sir Harry, I suppose you think,

with those airs, to carry off your behaviour to me this morning, do you?

Sir H. Flut. *Ye gods, ye gave to me a wife,*
Out of your grace and favour.

[He walks about.

Lady Flut. But I can tell you, sir, I won't bear such treatment, to be drawn off and on like your glove.

Sir H. Flut. Are you speaking to me, ma'am?

Lady Flut. To whom else should I speak?

Sir H. Flut. I protest I did not know you were in the room, child.

Lady Flut. Oh ridiculous affectation——Child! I'll assure you.

Sir H. Flut. [*Aside.*] Oh now it begins to work, if I can but keep cool.

But if your providence divine
For greater bliss design her,
To obey your will, at any time,
I am ready to resign her.

Lady Flut. Absurd!

Sir H. Flut. [*Going up close to her.*] To resign her, to resign her.

Lady Flut. [*Pushing him from her.*] Stupid!

Sir H. Flut. Ay, madam!

Lady Flut. Ay, indeed, sir.

Sir H. Flut. Retire to your chamber, madam, directly, instantly; and let me inform you, once for all, that you are not to take the liberty of coming into my dressing-room——A man's serious hours are not to be broke in upon by female impertinence.

Lady Flut. A man's? Ha, ha, ha!——

Sir H. Flut. Those flippant airs don't become you in the least, ma'am; but I don't think a silly girl worth my serious resentment—Retire with your trumpery work——I choose to be alone.

Lady Flut. Then I'll stay to vex you.

Sir H. Flut. Then, ma'am, I must teach you the obedience that is due to the commands of a husband.

Lady Flut. A husband! Oh gracious, defend me from such a husband—A battledore and shittlecock would be fitter for you than a wife, I fancy.

Sir H. Flut. And let me tell your pertness, a doll would be properer for you than a husband—there's for you, miss.

Lady Flut. You'll be a boy all your life, Sir Harry.

Sir H. Flut. And you'll be a fool all your life, Lady Snap.

Lady Flut. I shall be the fitter company for you, then.

Sir H. Flut. Tchou, tchou, tchou. [*Jeering her.*

Lady Flut. You are vastly polite, sir—Did you ever see Lord Medway behave thus to his lady?

Sir H. Flut. And did you ever see Lady Medway behave thus to her lord, if you go to that? Rat me but a man had better be a galley-slave, than married to a simpleton that ought to be sewing her sampler.

Lady Flut. And I'll swear a woman had better be a ballad-singer, than joined to a Jack-a-dandy, that ought to have a satchel at his back.

Sir H. Flut. Devil take me, but I have a good mind

to break every bit of the china you bought this morning.

Lady Flut. Do, do, do, and make taws of them to play with.

Sir H. Flut. A provoking, impertinent little——

Lady Flut. How dare you call me names, sir? I won't be called names, I'll tell my papa of this, so I will.

Sir H. Flut. Pretty baby, laugh and cry——

Enter Lord MEDWAY.

For shame, wipe your eyes, don't let him see you thus.

[*Aside to Lady* Flut.

Lady Flut. I don't care who sees me; I'll bear it no longer. I'll write to my papa to send for me—— I'll go to my uncle Branville's this very night.

Lord Med. Lady Flutter! I am sorry to see you in tears, madam, I did not know you had been at home —Sir Harry, I ask your pardon, perhaps I intrude— no afflicting news, I hope.

Sir H. Flut. News! no, no, there is nothing new in the case, I assure you, my lord.

Lord Med. Then, Sir Harry, I am afraid you are in fault here.

Lady Flut. [*Sobbing.*] Indeed, my lord, he is always in fault.

Sir H. Flut. If your lordship will take her word for it.

Lord Med. I should be glad to mediate between

you, but I really don't know how, unless I were informed of your cause of quarrel.

Sir H. Flut. I'll tell you, my lord——

Lady Flut. No, I'll tell him, sir——

Sir H. Flut. Look'e there now.

Lady Flut. He sent for me, my lord——

Sir H. Flut. Not I, indeed, my lord.

Lady Flut. I say you did, Sir Harry, on purpose to tease me, and talk nonsense to me——

Lord Med. Oh, fye, Sir Harry, could you find no better entertainment for your lady, than talking nonsense?—This is a sad account. [*Aside to him.*

Sir H. Flut. Faith, my lord, a man must unbend sometimes, and indulge in a little foolery—Life would be tedious else.

Lady Flut. And there he went on, repeating silly verses, to shew he wanted to get rid of me.

Sir H. Flut. Mere raillery, my lord; but she does not understand it.

Lady Flut. I should not have minded that so much neither, for I could be even with him in his gibing airs, if he had not at last called me names, downright abusive names, my lord: But I'll put an end to it at once. [*She goes to the glass drying her eyes.*

Lord Med. All wrong—all wrong—was this the advice I gave you? [*Aside to Sir* Harry.

Sir H. Flut. My lord, you cann't imagine how provoking she was.

Lady Flut. I dare say, my papa will be very ready to take me home again.

Lord Med. This must not be; yet don't you condescend to desire her stay, I'll try to persuade her.

[*Aside to Sir* Harry.

Sir H. Flut. Ough she's a vixen!

[*Lady* Flutter *rings a bell.*

Lord Med. I'll establish your empire, I'll engage, if you will give me the opportunity of talking with her. [*Aside to Sir* Harry.

Sir H. Flut. Faith I wish you would, for I am almost tired of the struggle. [*Aside to Lord* Med.

Enter a Servant.

Lady Flut. Are my chairmen in the way?

Serv. I'll see, madam.

Lady Flut. If they are, order them to get ready.

[*Exit Serv.*

Lord Med. Going a visiting so soon Lady Flutter?

Lady Flut. Only to my uncle Branville's, my lord; it is proper to acquaint him with my design.

Lord Med. Make some excuse quickly to leave us, or all will be over. [*Aside to Sir* Harry.

Sir H. Flut. I will—you shall see—Bless me! Well, I am sure-*ly* the most thoughtless fellow breathing. [*Sir* Harry *takes out his pocket-book, and turns over the leaves.*] My lord, can you forgive my rudeness now, if I run away from you? I must shew you the nature of my engagement though, and that, I hope, will be some apology——Wednesday, half an hour after five—you see—it's almost that already——

Lord Med. Humph!

Sir H. Flut. Perhaps I mayn't stay long——I am very sorry to leave your lordship alone though; but you'll forgive me.

[*Exit Sir* H. Flut. *without looking at Lady* Flut.

Lord Med. Leave me alone! 'Twere well if you were going to half as good company as that in which you leave me. [*Half aside.*

Lady Flut. [*Turning about.*] What does your lordship say?

Lord Med. Nothing, ma'am, but that I can excuse Sir Harry's going, as he leaves me in such good company.

Lady Flut. Oh, my lord, I am nobody in Sir Harry's opinion; but indeed, at present, I should be but a very dull companion to any one; so I am sure your lordship will excuse me if I take my leave.

Lord Med. A quarter of an hour, I hope, ma'am, will not break in too much upon your time.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. My master is gone out in your chair, madam; he said you might take the chariot; will your ladyship please to have it ordered?

Lady Flut. Gone out in my chair! See there my lord! did you ever know the like? I won't have the chariot—call me a hackney chair. [*Exit Serv.*] Pray, my lord, where is he gone? I saw he shewed you his memorandum.

Lord Med. Gone! on business, I think, of some kind.

Lady Flut. Business!——I don't know of any business that he has; I am sure it is some other engagement.

Lord Med. Oh—what am I thinking of? 'tis to the play.

Lady Flut. The play! he could not have been in such a hurry for that, 'tis too early.

Lord Med. He was to go with a party, and to call on some people by the way; that was the case.

Lady Flut. I don't much care; but I am sure that was not the thing neither; for I heard you say, it were well if he were going to half as good company, as that in which he left you.

Lord Med. And that I should certainly say, ma'am, let him be going to whom he would. But Sir Harry has a depraved taste.

Lady Flut. I don't doubt but he is going to some of his tavern-ladies. With all my heart; I don't love him well enough to be jealous of him.

Lord Med. I wish you did, for that would help on my work. [*Aside.*] Why, indeed, my dear Lady Flutter, I cann't say that Sir Harry is *quite* so deserving of you, as I could wish he were. But he is a mere boy, and cann't be supposed to be so sensible of your merit, as those are, who have had a little more experience in the sex.

Lady Flut. I sha'n't be long with him, that's one comfort.

Lord Med. But, my dear ma'am, consider how that will appear in the eyes of the world. Here you are

but a little while married, what must people think of a separation? Your good understanding is unquestioned, your personal accomplishments admired by all who know you; the blame then must all fall on poor Sir Harry.

Lady Flut. And so let it for me.

Lord Med. He deserves it, I confess; but, ma'am, give me leave to reason with you a little now; for I know you are a woman of sense, and capable of reasoning. Don't you think a *leetle* stroke of censure may possibly glance on you, for not endeavouring to bear, for a while longer at least, with his indiscretion; for every-body knows that your prudence is much superior to his, and therefore more will be expected from you.

Lady Flut. My lord, you compliment now.

Lord Med. Upon my life I don't. I am sure I have said it a thousand times, that I don't know a woman of fashion in town (a handsome one I mean, you are to take that into the account too) with half your talents.

Lady Flut. Oh, my lord.

Lord Med. Upon my word I am serious; and between ourselves, Sir Harry is thought to be but of very moderate parts, and that it was almost a sacrifice to marry you to him——But I would not say this for the world to any one but you.

Lady Flut. That is very good of you, my lord.

Lord Med. Your discretion, I am sure, will make a proper use of the hint. There are great allowances

to be made for a raw young fellow, who, like some vain and ignorant virtuoso, is possessed of a rarity, of which he neither understands the nature, nor knows the value. Oh, Lady Flutter, a beautiful and accomplished woman is a gem fit only for the cabinet of a man of sense and taste.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Madam, the chair is ready.

Lady Flut. Let it wait awhile.

Lord Med. Another sip of that sweet cordial flattery, and all the rougher passions will subside.

[*Aside.*

Lady Flut. What were you saying, my lord?

Lord Med. I believe I was saying, or at least I was thinking, that you are———

Lady Flut. What now?

Lord Med. A charming woman—taking you all together———

Lady Flut. Poh! fiddle faddle———

Lord Med. Indeed you are!

Lady Flut. Well, that is nothing to the purpose—What would you advise me to do with this foolish boy; for I would not have my discretion called in question, neither? I am sure if he had but the sense to talk to me as you have done, he might do just what he pleased with me.

Lord Med. Amiable creature!——Well, whatever you do, don't think of parting from him, for that would only be making mirth for all the spiteful old

maids in town; who have already prophesied, that miss and master would quarrel before a month was at an end, and each run home crying to their several mama's.

Lady Flut. Do the malicious creatures say so!—— Well, I'll disappoint them in that——But what can I do, my lord, he is so intolerably conceited and pert.

Lord Med. Oh, don't mind him, and it will wear off by degrees! But, my dear Lady Flutter, are there not other pleasures with which a fine woman could make herself amends, for the ill-humour of her husband?

Lady Flut. Not that I know of, my lord—— [*Sighs.*

Lord Med. I could name you some, if you would give me leave——

Lady Flut. You have my leave, indeed, my lord—My stars, what a charming thing good sense and good nature is! Your conversation has, I don't know how, soothed me so, that, though I am not happy, yet I don't find myself so much out of temper as I was a while ago.

Lord Med. Oh that Sir Harry and I could change situations, then would the loveliest woman in England be the happiest. [*He kisses her hand.*

Lady Flut. Lard! my lord, what's that for?

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Sir Anthony Branville, madam, comes to wait on your ladyship.

Lady Flut. Oh, I am glad of that—shew him up.

Lord Med. So am not I. [*Aside.*

Lady Flut. You know, my lord, it will save me the trouble of going to his house this evening.

Lord Med. Let me beg of you, my dear Lady Flutter, not to mention to your uncle any thing that has passed between you and Sir Harry. I'll give you many good reasons for it another time. Have I so much influence over you?

Lady Flut. Well, my lord, to oblige you, I won't.

Lord Med. Sweet condescending creature!

Lady Flut. But you must tell me what you promised.

Lord Med. Not now, my dear ma'am—some other opportunity I will tell you such things——

Enter Sir ANTHONY BRANVILLE, *he bows very low to both, without speaking.*

Lady Flut. Uncle, your servant.

Lord Med. Sir Anthony, your most obedient.

Sir A. Bran. My lord (without a compliment) I esteem myself extremely happy, in the agreeable hope, that I now see your lordship in perfect health.

Lord Med. I thank you, good Sir Anthony, pretty well. Heavens! what a circumlocution, to ask a man how he does! [*Aside.*

Sir A. Bran. And you, niece, I assure you, have a very proper proportion (as undoubtedly your merit claims) of my unfeigned esteem and good wishes; as likewise hath my worthy nephew, Sir Harry; whom

I should have been proud to have found in this good company, and deem both myself and him unfortunate in his being absent from it.

Lady Flut. Sir Harry does not think so, I believe. [*Half aside.*

Lord Med. Hush——hush. [*Aside to her.*

Sir A. Bran. What does my niece Flutter say?

Lady Flut. Nothing, uncle.

Sir A. Bran. Pardon me; I apprehend you had uttered something. Well, my lord, I am next to inquire (though, to say the truth, I ought, in point of good breeding, to have done it first); I am next, I say, to inquire how your excellent lady does, and the fair young lady, your daughter.

Lord Med. Both at your service, Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. May I presume to ask the Christian name of the young lady.

Lord Med. I would not have Lady Medway hear you make so emphatical a distinction, Sir Anthony; ladies you know, are always young———

Sir A. Bran. 'Tis a privilege I know they claim, my lord, and I hope you don't think me capable of such barbarism as to dispute it with them; but at the same time I imagine 'tis not possible in nature, but that the mother must be rather older than her daughter——You'll excuse my pleasantry.

Lord Med. Oh, surely, as the ladies are not by—But why do you inquire my daughter's name, Sir Anthony?

Sir A. Bran. Why, my lord, there is a pretty fa-

miliar tenderness in sometimes using the chris-*ti*-an name, that is truly delightful to a lover; for such, my lord, with all due deference to the lady's high deserts, I wish myself to be considered.

Lady Flut. Oh lord, oh lord, my uncle Miss Med-way's lover! I shall burst if I stay—— [*Aside.*

Lord Med. Louisa, Sir Anthony, is her christian's name, which you are at liberty to use with as much familiar tenderness as you please.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, I have a most lively sense of the very great honour you lordship does me; and I can assure you my heart, [*sighs*] if I can with certainty venture to pronounce about any thing which is in its own nature so uncertain——

Lady Flut. Oh, now he has got into his parenthesis— [*Aside.*

Sir A. Bran. My heart, I say, is endeavouring to reassume that liberty, of which it has so long been deprived, for no other purpose, than that of offering itself a willing captive again to the fair Louisa's charms.

Lady Flut. Very well, uncle; I see this visit was not all intended for me; I find you have something to say to my lord, so I won't interrupt you.

Sir A. Bran. No, no, no, niece Flutter; upon my reputation, this visit was meant wholly for you, as I could not possibly divine that I should have found his lordship with you; to whom I intended to have paid my respects separately and apart.

Lord Med. Lady Flutter! I ask a thousand pardons

—We turn you out of your apartment—Sir Anthony will you do me the favour to step into my study?

Lady Flut. No, no, indeed you sha'n't stir! I'll go and see what the ladies are doing; I fancy they think I am lost. [*Exit Lady* Flutter.

Lord Med. Sir Anthony, I assure you I should think myself very happy in an alliance with a gentleman of your worth.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, you do me honour.

Lord Med. I have mentioned you to my daughter—

Sir A. Bran. Mentioned me, my lord!

Lord Med. Wouldn't you have had it so, Sir Anthony?

Sir A. Bran. My lord, the profound respect I have for your lordship, makes me unwilling to animadvert on such proceedings, as you in your wisdom (which I take to be very great) have thought expedient; but I am a man, my lord, who love method.

Lord Med. Sir Anthony, I imagined it would have been agreeable to you, or it should have been very far——

Sir A. Bran. Conceive me right, Lord Medway; 'tis perfectly agreeable to me, and consonant to my wishes, to be looked on with a favourable eye by the virtuous young lady your daughter; but, my lord, to tell you sincerely (and sincerity, my lord, I hold to be a virtue), my heart is at present in a fluctuating state.

Lord Med. I am sorry then, sir, that the thing has been mentioned at all. I understood you were determined. What can the blockhead mean? [*Aside.*

Sir A. Bran. Good, my lord, your patience: I am determined! that is to say, my will is determined; but the will and the heart, your lordship knows, are two very different things.

Lord Med. Sir Anthony, I should be glad we understood each other at once. I apprehended Mrs. Knightly's ill usage of you, had made you give up all thoughts of her; and as you seemed determined to marry, and declared yourself an admirer of my daughter, who, I must say, (the article of fortune excepted) is, I think, as unobjectionable a wife as you could choose.

Sir A. Bran. Undoubtedly, my lord——

Lord Med. I was willing to give my consent, and thought you appeared as ready to embrace it.

Sir A. Bran. True, my lord; and so I do still, most cordially.

Lord Med. Why then, sir, what is your determination? for a young woman of family and reputation must not be trifled with.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, I believe trifling is a fault which was never yet attributed to Sir Anthony Branville——My lord, I am above the imputation—and your lordship would do well to remember, that I have the misfortune to be of a warm, not to say of an impetuous disposition.

Lord Med. Sir, I don't mean to provoke your wrath.

Sir A. Bran. You are the father of my mistress, my lord—that thought restrains my fury—But this woman (Mrs. Knightly I mean, for a woman I find she is, though I once thought her an angel;) she, I say, has not yet dismissed me in form; and till that is

done, I think myself bound in honour, not to make a tender of my heart or hand to any lady whatsoever.

Lord Med. Oh, Sir Anthony, I find you have still a hankering after the widow, and only want an opportunity to endeavour at getting into her good graces again—You would fain see her.

Sir A. Bran. By no means my lord; not for the world!—for, as I told your lordship, I would not trust my heart with such an interview.—No, no, I know the witchcraft of her beauty too well.

Lord Med. How do you mean to disengage yourself then?

Sir A. Bran. My design is to indite an epistle to her, and to request that she will, under her hand, in full and explicit terms, give me an absolute and final release from all the vows I have made her.

Lord Med. I think you are perfectly right, Sir Anthony, and act agreeably to the dictates of true honour.—I wont lose the fool if I can help it. [*Aside.*

Sir A. Bran. I would fain do so, my lord.

Lord Med. I dare say you will get a full and free discharge from your sovereign lady and mistress.

Sir A. Bran. 'Tis to be so presum-*ed*, my lord—but as for seeing her, 'twere safer, my lord, to encounter a basilisk, I assure you.

Mrs. KNIGHTLY *rushes in, a Servant attending her to the door.* *Sir* ANTHONY *starts and draws back.*

Mrs. Knight. My lord, I beg your pardon; your servant told me Lady Flutter was here.

Lord Med. I am glad he made the mistake, madam, as it has given me the honour of seeing you. Go tell your lady—She was here but this minute——This is unlucky. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Knight. I am quite ashamed of this, my lord; I just came to prattle half an hour with Lady Flutter, and to try if I could tempt her to the opera, and here I have broke in upon you so unawares——Bless me, Sir Anthony! is it you? I declare I did not see you. Why, you barbarian, where have you been for this month past? My lord, do you know that Sir Anthony is a lover of mine? [*Sir* Anthony *advances, bowing gravely.*]

Sir A. Bran. That Sir Anthony was a lover of yours, madam, he has but too fatally experienced.

Mrs. Knight. And a'n't you so still, you inconstant toad?

Lord Med. Take my advice—and make your retreat as fast as you can. [*Aside to Sir* Anth.

Sir A. Bran. Impossible, my lord; the magic of her eyes renders me immoveable—but I'll try.

[*Aside to Lord* Med.

Mrs. Knight. What, I suppose my lord is your confidant; you see I have made him mine too.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. The ladies are all gone out together, my lord.

Lord Med. Did your lady leave word what time she would be at home?

Serv. No, my lord.

Lord Med. Oh once they are on the wing, there is no knowing when they will return—I wish she would go. [*Aside.*] Will you allow me the honour of gallanting you to the opera, ma'am? I dare say Sir Anthony, on such an occasion, will excuse my leaving him—'Tis almost the time, I believe.

Mrs. Knight. Oh dear, my lord! too soon by an age. [*Looking at her watch.*]——I am such an impatient creature, I cannot endure to wait a minute for any thing, and therefore never go to any public entertainment till after it begins. Is not that the right way, Sir Anthony? but I should not ask you, who are so phlegmatic, you could wait till dooms-day for any thing.

Lord Med. Come, ma'am, you are too severe on my friend Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, this is but an inconsiderable specimen, a trifle, to what I could produce, of the severity I have received from this ungrateful fair-one.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. There is a gentleman below desires to speak with your lordship on business.

Lord Med. I'll come to him.——For Heaven's sake, ma'am, don't keep this poor lover any longer in expectation, but dismiss him fairly at once, for your own honour as well as in pity to him. [*Aside to Mrs.*

Knightly.] Sir Anthony, you'll excuse me for a few minutes. [*Exit.*

Sir A. Bran. My lord, I shall beg leave to wish your lordship a good evening——I was just going away.

Mrs. Knight. Why, sure you would not be such a clown as to leave me by myself, Sir Anthony!——I cannot go; for thinking that Lady Flutter was at home, I sent my chair to pay two or three visits.—— Now, pr'ythee sit down, and say some sprightly thing to me.

Sir A. Bran. Ah, madam, my sprightly sallies were for happier days——

When Flavia listened to my sighs,
And fann'd the amorous blaze,
That love which revel'd in my eyes
Grew wanton in her praise——

Mrs. Knight. I protest I did not know you were so good a poet.

Sir A. Bran. The Muses, madam, are not such niggards of their favours. I have been indulged with some rapturous intercourses with those ladies, I can assure you.

Mrs. Knight. Oh fie, Sir Anthony. What——tell tales?

Sir A. Bran. No aspersions, madam—'tis very well known they are all virgins.

Mrs. Knight. Well, but now let's hear what you can say to me in prose.

Sir A. Bran. Truly, Madam, this unexpected (I

may say unhoped for) encounter, has so disconcerted me, that though I have much to say, I am utterly at a loss where to begin.

Mrs. Knight. Why then don't begin at all, Sir Anthony; for I think you are generally more at a loss how to make an end.

" *Sir A. Bran.* Madam, I must beg the favour of " being allowed a hearing; a patient one, madam; " for such the nature of my case requires.

" *Mrs. Knight.* Is it a physical one, or a case of " conscience, Sir Anthony?

" *Sir A. Bran.* Neither, madam. I did propose " to unfold my mind to you in a letter—

" *Mrs. Knight.* But then if I should not unfold " your letter, Sir Anthony, which is a thing might " happen, in that case I should never know your " mind, you know."

Sir A. Bran. If you won't hear me, madam—

Mrs. Knight. Well, well, I will hear you; but squeeze what you have to say into as small a compass as you can, my dear Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. The occasion, madam, of my giving you this trouble (if as such you are pleased to consider it) is as follows. I have courted you, madam, that is, made honourable addresses to you, for the space of six months, during which time you gave me all the encouragement——

Mrs. Knight. Encouragement! [*screams.*] Oh, all you powers of chastity defend me!—Encouragement, Sir Anthony! Of what nature, pray?

Sir A. Bran. Your pardon, madam—Consistently with modesty I mean; or such as became a virtuous lady to bestow on a passionate admirer; for such I pronounce myself to have been.

Mrs. Knight. Oh, I understand you now—Well, sir?

Sir A. Bran. For a time I was favoured with your smiles, and had reason to believe that my faithful passion would have been crowned with success. When all of a sudden, to my unutterable astonishment, the sun-shine of my hopes vanished.

Mrs Knight. I only stepp'd behind a cloud, Sir Anthony, to play at bo peep with you.

Sir A. Bran. Oh, madam, a total eclipse, I do assure you—My visits were repulsed, my letters unanswered, and finally your doors shut against me.

Mrs Knight. Did I do all this to poor Sir Anthony?

Sir A. Bran. You did, madam—Tyrant, you know you did. And now, madam, I would fain learn your reasons for such usage.

Mrs Knight Reasons—I never gave a reason for any thing I did since I was born.

Sir A. Bran. That is rather extraordinary, madam; but if you will not condescend to give me any reasons for your cruelty, all I have left to desire, or rather to demand, (pardon me the expression, madam) is now from your own lips, to receive my final doom.

Mrs. Knight. Why, I shan't marry these ten years, Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. That, madam, is an indeterminate answer. I humbly request the favour of a final one.

THE DISCOVERY

Mrs. Knight. Oh! I'm melting away with the fondest passion!
You are wishing for Death!

Act 2.

Burney del. Bokey sculp.

London. Printed for J. Bell, British Library, Strand, March 9 1793.

Mrs. Knight. Why, what are you ill for? I protest, Sir Anthony, I begin to [illegible]

Sir A. Bran. A final answer, madam?

Mrs. Knight. I'll be hanged if I have not yet a rival! Oh, faithless man! that have sworn [illegible] how many times over, to be true to me and [illegible] and I, like the rest of my easy sex, to believe you!

Sir A. Bran. Madam, let me most humbly [illegible] you—

Mrs. Knight. Begone, dissembler—but what can I expect from such levity as yours—

Sir A. Bran. Levity, madam! levity! I absolutely disavow the charge—pray, madam—let me implore you, for the last time (pray observe that, madam, for the last time) to grant me the favour.—[*He endeavours to kneel low, she flirts from him, and he catches hold of her knee.*]

Mrs. Knight. Bless me! Why sure, Sir Anthony, you would not offer to kiss me!

Sir A. Bran. Oh, heavens, madam, kiss you! Madam, let me take the liberty to inform you, that since I could distinguish between virtue and vice, I never took so unwarrantable a freedom with any lady upon the face of the earth.

Enter Lady FLUTTER.

Lady Flut. My goodness! what's the matter? Frightful, my dear, what's the matter?

London. Printed for J. Bell, British Library, Strand, March 9 1793.

Mrs. Knight. Why, what are you in such a hurry for? I protest, Sir Anthony, I begin to grow jealous.

Sir A. Bran. A final answer, madam.

Mrs. Knight. I'll be hanged if I have not got a rival! Oh, faithless man! that have sworn I don't know how many times over, to be true to me till death—and I, like the rest of my easy sex, to believe you?

Sir A. Bran. Madam, let me most humbly beseech you—

Mrs. Knight. Begone, dissembler—but what could I expect from such levity as yours—

Sir A. Bran. Levity, madam! levity! I absolutely disavow the charge—pray, madam—let me implore you, for the last time (pray observe that, madam, for the last time) to grant me the favour.—[*He advances, bowing low, she flirts from him, and he catches hold of her sleeve.*]

Mrs. Knight. Bless me! Why sure, Sir Anthony, you would not offer to kiss me!

Sir A. Bran. Oh, heavens, madam, kiss you! Madam, let me take the liberty to inform you, that since I could distinguish between virtue and vice, I never took so unwarrantable a freedom with any lady upon the face of the earth.

Enter Lady FLUTTER.

Lady Flut. My goodness! what's all this about? Mrs. Knightly, my dear, what's the matter?

Mrs. Knight. I protest, my dear, your uncle is so very amorous, that it is not safe to stay alone with him.

Sir A. Bran. Madam, madam, I blush for you; humbly asking your pardon for being so free as to say so.

Mrs. Knight. Blush for yourself, Sir Anthony, you have most cause.

Lady Flut. What, in the name of wonder, is all this about?

Mrs. Knight. Oh, Lady Flutter, I am ashamed to tell you his behaviour!

Lady Flut. My uncle's behaviour, madam!

Sir A. Bran. Madam, I hope my niece Flutter has too good an opinion of the propriety of my conduct, upon all occasions, to be prejudiced by your uncharitable insinuations. And now, madam, I demand, in the presence of my niece aforesaid, that you will give me a full and formal acquittal of all my vows and promises to you.

" *Mrs. Knight.* I must take time to consider of
" that, Sir Anthony; vows are serious things; I sup-
" pose all yours are registered in Cupid's books.

" *Sir A. Bran.* I insist on my release, madam.

" *Mrs. Knight.* I don't know whether it be safe to
" give you one, Sir Anthony; I must consult a law-
" yer first.

" *Sir A. Bran.* Madam, I am sorry to say, that you
" depart extremely from that punctilious honour, as
" well as generosty of sentiment, which is such an

" ornament to the fair part of the creation—I only " ask for the favour of being discharged—a favour I " was never refused by any lady before, I assure you, " niece.

" *Lady Flut.* That I dare say." [*Aside.*] Well, I cannot for my life understand all this.

Mrs. Knight. Oh, he's a rebel in his heart, that's plain, and only wants a pretence to forfeit his allegiance; but I won't give him that satisfaction.

Sir A. Bran. Then, madam, since you urge me to it, in one word, I here cancel all my vows——

Mrs. Knight. It is not in your power.

Sir A. Bran. Renounce your empire, madam——

Mrs. Knight. I defy you.

Sir A. Bran. And utterly disclaim your favour.

Mrs. Knight. Stubborn traitor!

Sir A. Bran. And now, madam, I will withdraw my person and my heart——

Mrs. Knight. Not your heart, Sir Anthony!

Sir A. Bran. Both, both, madam, I do aver it to you; and will make an offering of them where they will be more honourably, and more gratefully entertained. And so, madam, I am, with proper respect, your most obedient (though rejected) humble servant. Niece Flutter, I have the pleasure of wishing you a very good evening.

[*Exit Sir* Anthony, *bowing, both ladies burst out a laughing.*]

Mrs. Knight. [*Imitating his manner, looking after him, and curtsying very low.*] And I return you my

very unfeigned acknowledgments for ridding me of your most insipid solemnity, my dear Sir Anthony. Ha, ha, ha, poor soul! to whom is he going to offer his Platonic adorations, do you know, my dear?

Lady Flut. Why, by what I gathered just now from the conversation between my lord and him (for it was a secret to me before) I find Miss Medway is likely to supplant you.

Mrs. Knight. Supplant me, my dear creature! why, sure you cannot suppose I had ever any serious thoughts of the poor man; humbly begging your pardon, as he says, for taking such a liberty with your uncle.

Lady Flut. I should wonder if you had, I own; I am sure nothing but his fortune could have made my lord think of him for a son-in-law.

Mrs. Knight. Does Miss Medway approve of the thing? she is a sober sort of a girl, I think.

Lady Flut. Oh, intolerably so; I hardly ever converse with her, though under the same roof. She is for ever poring over a book or a needle.——Yet I don't suppose she likes him either; I have heard it whispered that she loves my cousin Branville, who, I hear, is expected home every hour.

Mrs. Knight. If I thought so, I would keep Sir Anthony dangling this twelvemonth, out of mere compassion to the poor girl. For, notwithstanding his threats, I know he is still devoted to me.

Lady Flut. But how would that square with your views in regard to Colonel Medway?

Mrs. Knight. Oh, my sweet friend, that question has made me serious all at once. I can laugh at Sir Anthony no more; indeed I have not lately had spirits enough to be diverted with him, and, for that reason, tried to shake him off. I don't know what to think of the colonel. I came here this evening on purpose to consult you. My lord, who, I perceive, is a man of the world, and full of design, dropped some hints to me about his son, by which I find the thing would at least be very agreeable to him; yet the colonel has not been near me since. I wish I knew his sentiments.

Lady Flut. I am sure I cannot inform you. There is none of the family very communicative, but my lord; he is the best of them, that is certain.

Enter Sir HARRY FLUTTER.

Sir H. Flut. Ha, Mrs. Knightly! my adorable! I kiss your hands.

Mrs. Knight. Oh, Sir Harry, you have missed such an entertainment! Here has been Sir Anthony——

Sir H. Flut. Well, and what did uncle parenthesis say to you?

Mrs. Knight. Oh, he has abandoned me—I am doomed to wear the willow garland.

Sir H. Flut. Oh, you cruel devil, you—'tis you who have abandoned him, I dare say.——What, Lady Flutter! I am amazed to find you here; I thought you had abandoned me, as Mrs. Knightly says, and that by this time you had taken post for Oxfordshire,

in order to tell papa, that Sir Harry was such a naughty boy, he would not give it its way in every thing.—Mrs. Knightly, when I went out this evening, she was going to elope, absolutely bent upon running away from her husband.

Lady Flut. And you see, ma'am, the return he makes me for my good nature in not doing so. I think Sir Harry, after the provocation I received from you, if I changed my mind, you ought to be very much obliged to me.

Sir H. Flut. My dear, if the changing your mind be an obligation, I own my obligations to you on that score are innumerable.

Lady Flut. I suppose you think that witty, now.

Mrs. Knight. Pray, pray, good people, am I to be left out of the conversation?

Sir H. Flut. Oh, ma'am, my Lady Flutter is so extremely quick in her repartees, that you will find it very hard to put in a word, I assure you.

Lady Flut. And Sir Harry is so immoderately fond of hearing himself talk, that he does not desire either of us to give him any interruption, I assure you.

Sir H. Flut. Not your ladyship, I acknowledge.

Mrs. Knight. Well, I vow, Sir Harry, if you were my husband, I should hate you, for all you are such a handsome toad.

Sir H. Flut. Indeed you would not.

Mrs. Knight. Indeed I should.

Sir H. Flut. Go, you little hypocrite——

Mrs. Knight. Get you gone, you rattlepate, I don't mind what you say.——Come, Lady Flutter, will you go with me to the opera, my dear?

Lady Flut. With all my heart. Any where, rather than stay at home.

Sir H. Flut. You see, ma'am, what a happy man I am in domestic felicity! But here, Lady Flutter, you must give me leave to interpose a little of my lawful authority; and therefore I desire, if it be not too great an honour, that you will oblige me with your company at home this evening.

Lady Flut. Indeed I sha'n't, Sir Harry.

Sir H. Flut. Then, ma'am, I say, indeed you shall.

Mrs. Knight. Bless me, Sir Harry, you a'n't serious, sure! I am vastly sorry I proposed the thing at all. I won't go to the opera, for my part—I'll stay and chat with you, if you will give me leave—or—suppose we had a pool at piquet.

Sir H. Flut. By no means, ma'am. Why should you deprive yourself of your entertainment for her childishness?—I'll attend you to the opera myself.

Mrs. Knight. Indeed you sha'n't, for I won't go.

Sir H. Flut. Indeed you shall, and I'll go with you.

Mr. Knight. I vow you shall neither of you go, and so good-bye to you. [*Runs out.*

Lady Flut. So, Sir Harry, you have exposed yourself prettily!

Sir H. Flut. Not in the least, my dear; I have only shewn you to advantage.

Lady Flut. It is well one of us has a little discretion.

Sir H. Flut. Meaning your wise self, I presume; but, to shew you that I have a small share too, I will enter into no farther disputes with you; but, leaving you to your agreeable contemplations, follow my charming Mrs. Knightly to the opera, who, I fancy, will prefer my company to your ladyship's. [*Exit.*

Lady Flut. Very well, sir!——If I am not even with you for this!——

Enter Lord MEDWAY *at another Door.*

Lord Med. Alone, ma'am! (I have been detained longer than I expected.) What is become of Mrs. Knightly and Sir Anthony?

Lady Flut. Both gone, my lord——My uncle broke away in resentment, never, I think, to see her more.

Lord Med. So, so!——What have you done with Lady Medway and my daughter?

Lady Flut. They are at their evening meditations, I suppose, my lord. They both came in with me, after we had made a short visit, but, according to custom, retired to my lady's dressing-room.

Lord Med. Oh, they read together every evening!—But you seem ruffled, my dear Lady Flutter; what is the matter?

Lady Flut. Sir Harry——

Lord Med. What of him?

Lady Flut. He has been here since; but so intole-

rably rude and provoking, positively there's no enduring him any longer. I should be sorry to leave your lordship's house so soon, where I have been so kindly received; but I am determined not to continue under the same roof with Sir Harry.

Lord Med. If your departure were to be a punishment only to Sir Harry, I should not oppose it; for I must allow, that he deserves all your resentment. But, my dear Lady Flutter, I could name another, whom you would make infinitely more unhappy by your absence.

Lady Flut. Who can that be, my lord?

Lord Med. Suppose I were to name myself?

Lady Flut. You are very obliging, my lord; I have not the least doubt of your friendship.

Lord Med. Friendship, my dear ma'am, sometimes assumes a tenderer name——When a man entertains it for a woman, young and charming as you are, what ought it then to be called?

Lady Flut. Why, friendship, to be sure——what should it be else?

Lord Med. Shall I tell you?

Lady Flut. No, I won't be told.

Lord Med. Then you guess——

Lady Flut. Not I, indeed, my lord.——

Lord Med. 'Tis love! love!—is not that a sweeter sound?

Lady Flut. 'Tis a sound with which I am very little acquainted. [*Sighs.*

Lord Med. Then let me be your tutor, to teach you a science, in which Sir Harry is not worthy to instruct you.

Lady Flut. Oh, my lord, if I had met with you before I was married, and before you were married—But it is too late now——

Lord Med. You must not say so. What are marriage ties, if the hearts are not joined? 'Tis that alone which makes the union sacred.

Lady Flut. That is the chief thing, I grant.

Lord Med. Oh, it is all in all!—With regard to Lady Medway now; she is a good woman, it is true, and I esteem her as such; but there is no love in the case, so that I consider myself absolutely as a single man. 'Tis just the same with you; there has a ceremony indeed passed between you and Sir Harry; but he slights you, and you very justly despise him: so that, to all intents and purposes you are a single woman.

Lady Flut. I wish I were, I'm sure, my lord.

Lord Med. Why so you are, my dear ma'am, if you would consider the thing rightly—If I thought otherwise, though I confess I love you to adoration, I would sooner stab myself to the heart, than endeavour to win your affections.

Lady Flut. Indeed, my lord, I believe you.

Lord Med. Then, since we are equally unhappy in wedlock, what crime can there be in our mutual endeavours to console each other?

Lady Flut. I am sure I don't intend any harm.

Lord Med. Then why will you talk of leaving me? You know Sir Harry is too indifferent to be concerned at a separation; the grief, the disappointment, will all be mine.

Lady Flut. Indeed, my lord, I should be very unwilling to make you uneasy, to whom I owe so many obligations.

Lord Med. Then speak no more of parting. [*He takes her hand.*] I have a thousand things to tell you. The delightful subject we are upon is inexhaustible, but I can never get you for half an hour to myself.

Lady Flut. Why, no; Sir Harry is so perpetually whiffling backwards and forwards, one cannot be alone a minute for him.

[*Lady* Medway *comes to the door, and steps back on seeing Lord* Medway *and Lady* Flutter *in such familiar conference.*]

Lord Med. I have thought of an expedient, which, if you will agree to, will secure us against all interruptions for the future.

Lady Flut. What is it?

Lord Med. You know Lady Lovegrove, who sat in the box with us at the play the other night (a very worthy woman.) I am sure she would be glad of your acquaintance. I'll introduce you to her, and there, you know, when you go on an evening to drink tea, I can meet you, and we can enjoy an hour's conversation without being interrupted.

Lady Flut. I protest that will do very well. But we must not let Sir Harry know a word of my ac-

quaintance with her, or may-be, some evening, he'll be for thrusting himself in.

Lord Med. By no means, he shall never be of our party.——Come, ma'am, I fancy, by this time, the ladies have done with their sober studies.—Suppose we were to join them.

Lady Flut. As you will, my lord.

Lord Med. Not a word more of parting, remember.

Lady Flut. I'll try what I can do to oblige your lordship. [*Exit Lord* Med. *leading her out.*

Lady MEDWAY *comes out.*

Lady Med. Oh, Lord Medway! this is beyond what I thought you capable of; but I will, if possible, prevent the destruction that you have plan'd. [*Exit.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

Changes to the Widow KNIGHTLY'*s. Enter Colonel* MEDWAY *and Miss* RICHLY.

Colonel Medway.

I WOULD not have mentioned it at all, if I thought you could have suffered it to make so serious an impression on you.

Miss Rich. It ought not, I confess, knowing as I do the truth and generosity of your heart—and yet I cannot help being alarmed—an immense fortune, and

a fine woman, as my sister really is—the temptation is so great! that were it any one but you——

Col. Med. Indeed, my dear Clara, these fears of yours reproach, at the same time that they flatter me. Is it necessary that I should tell you, over and over again, for the thousandth time, that I never can love any woman but yourself?

Miss Rich. I do not want to be convinced—and yet I own I am pleased to hear you repeat even what you have said a thousand times; but your father's authority——I dread that.

Col. Med. Believe me, you have no reason; for, though no son was ever more observant of a father's will than I have always been of his, yet, in the particular concerns of my heart, I must be my own director. This my father knows, and I hope he will never urge me more upon the subject.

Miss Rich. But if he should?

Col. Med. Would you have me swear to you?

Miss Rich. Oh, not for the world!—I am ashamed of doubting, and yet I don't know how it is, I am full of apprehensions: the truth is, I am not very happy at home; my sister is, of late, grown cold and peevish to me—I never suspected the cause before, but it is now too plain.

Col. Med. Did she ever mention me to you?

Miss Rich. Never but in a careless way—and yet I think since your father's last visit to her, she has been in better spirits than before, though I am not used one bit the kinder.

Col. Med. You shall not long be subject to her tyranny. My father already knows the secret of my love; and I think that, notwithstanding the article of fortune weighs much with him, his regard to my happiness will even out-balance that.

Miss Rich. I wish it may——Bless me! here's my sister.

Enter Mrs. KNIGHTLY, *she curtsies gravely to the Colonel.*

Mrs. Knight. I thought you had been alone, Miss Richly, and came to chat with you; but I see you are engaged. [*Coolly.*

Col. Med. I hope my being here, ma'am, will not deprive Miss Richly of the pleasure of your company.

Miss Rich. I believe, sister, we shall both think our conversation very much improved by your making a third in it.

Mrs. Knight. I don't know that—A tête-a-tête is to the full as often disagreeably interrupted, as improved by another person.

Col. Med. That, madam, I am sure, can never happen, where you make the addition.

Mrs. Knight. I should be sorry it were the case now, I own, colonel; for, to tell you the truth, I have vanity enough to be mortified at the thoughts of being considered as an intruder.

Col. Med. Bless me, madam! I know of but one circumstance in the world, which could possibly place you in such a light.

Mrs. Knight. What is that, pray, sir?

Col. Med. Where an inferior beauty was meditating a conquest, and you stept in to snatch it from her.

Mrs. Knight. An inferior beauty—I protest, colonel, I don't well understand that——There is an appearance of gallantry in the compliment, and yet there is something a little mystical in it too. Clara, are you good at solving riddles?

Miss Rich. No, indeed, sister; you know I have a very literal understanding; besides, I think what the colonel says requires no explanation.

Mrs. Knight. Then, my dear, I won't affront you by making any application.

Miss Rich. If you should, sister, I am very ready to acknowledge my part in it; but you should consider that, by the remainder, you would draw on yourself that imputation, which, but now, you wished to avoid.

Mrs. Knight. You see, colonel, the mysterious speech you have made has the fate of all oracles, to be interpreted different ways, and, perhaps, none of them right.——Nay, I am inclined to think it bears a still nearer resemblance to them, and that you, like the priests of old, delivered what you said without any inspiration of a god.

Col. Med. There, madam, your comparison fails, for I assure you, I am at this instant under the influence of a very powerful one.

Mrs. Knight. I vow I don't believe you; do you, Clara?

Miss Rich. I never had any reason to doubt the colonel's veracity, sister.

Mrs. Knight. What, then, you think he is really in love?

Miss Rich. Don't you hear him acknowledge it?

Col. Med. Nay, madam, if you won't take my word for it, I cannot see what reason you have to believe any one's else.

Mrs. Knight. Why, no, that's true—But where a matter of faith doesn't concern one's self, infidelity, you know, can be of no great consequence one way or another.

Col. Med. That's pretty home. [*Aside.*

Miss Rich. Very true, sister; but scepticism is a dangerous, as well as an uneasy state, in some cases.

Mrs. Knight. And a state of security, Miss Clara, the casuists in love, as well as religion, are agreed, is not always the safest. But I don't know how we fell upon this odd topic.

Miss Rich. Nor I, I am sure.

Col. Med. I don't know how we came to talk of it; but I am convinced the man must be very insensible who could avoid thinking of it in this company.

Mrs. Knight. Clara, you are a monopolist; but I will have my share in that compliment——I don't know, colonel, though, what your mistress would say if she were to hear you say so?

Miss Rich. She'd forgive him, I dare say.

Col. Med. Come, come, ladies, I see by your pursuing this subject, that you have a design of getting

my secret out of me; and, as I am sure I could not withstand your united force, I think my safest way is to make my retreat before I betray myself.

[*Bows to both, and exit.*

Mrs. Knight. How long was the colonel here before I came in, Clara?

Miss Rich. Not above a quarter of an hour——— Pray, sister, why do you ask?

Mrs. Knight. Because it is quite astonishing to me, how a man of his vivacity can be entertained by such a piece of still-life as you are.

Miss Rich. Why, sister, it is not an infallible maxim that we most admire those who are exactly of our own disposition. I, now, for example, who am naturally grave, do, notwithstanding, admire sprightliness in other people.

Mrs. Knight. Umph, so it seems———

Miss Rich. And the colonel, though extremely lively himself, may, however, not disrelish the conversation of a serious woman.

Mrs. Knight. Indeed, Clara, you are a very conceited girl. I dare swear, if the colonel says fine things to you, you believe every word of them.

Miss Rich. Indeed, sister, I have as humble an opinion of myself as you, or any one else, can possibly have of me.

Mrs. Knight. I am very glad to hear it, child; for I own I think vanity would not be a very desirable companion in your situation.

Miss Rich. What have I done, sister, to deserve these severe taunts from you?

Mrs. Knight. Oh, Clara, if you accuse me of severity, I must tell you that you are an ungrateful girl, and I fancy we shall not continue much longer together.

" *Miss Rich.* I am not quite so destitute, madam, " but that I can still be received by that friend who " had the care of me from my childhood.

" *Mrs. Knight.* Very well, madam, I shall con- " sider of it; but, perhaps, I may find out some " more eligible place for you."

Miss Rich. I see, sister, you are resolved to disapprove of every thing I say or do; my company is become irksome to you, and, for the present at least, I'll rid you of it—— [*Exit.*

Mrs. Knight. I was very unlucky in ever taking her into my house; had it not been for that, I should never, perhaps, have seen the only man who probably could have given me a minute's uneasiness.—I am puzzled at his conduct—and yet I suspect now more than ever that they love each other.——If it be so, I shall know it too soon, for I am sure Lord Medway is thoroughly in my interests.——Yet my suspense is insupportable.——Who's there?

Enter a Maid.

Maid. Madam, your chair is ready.

Mrs. Knight. Come hither——I desire you will

give orders to the servants, that any letters directed to my sister should be brought to me——I suspect that girl has got into a silly intrigue.

Maid. I believe, madam, miss receives letters very often; but I shall take care, for the future, that you shall have them first.

Mrs. Knight. Be sure you do. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Changes to Lord MEDWAY'*s.* *Lady* FLUTTER *at her Toilet. Enter to her Lady* MEDWAY.

Lady Flut. Good morning to your ladyship.

[*Looks coolly at her.*

Lady Med. I was afraid you were not well, Lady Flutter, as you lay a-bed so long this morning.

Lady Flut. I rested ill last night, nothing more.

Lady Med. I hope I don't interrupt you, madam.

Lady Flut. Not in the least; but I vow you are so ceremonious, Lady Medway, that you will not allow me to think myself at home.

Lady Med. I should be sorry for that, madam; but you know there are times when one would not choose to be broke in upon by any one; yet, to shew you how free I make with you, I have brought my work with me, if you will let me pore a little at it.

Lady Flut. I wish she and her work were far enough. [*Aside.*] Your ladyship is excessively obliging. You and Miss Medway are such housewives,

you quite shame me—This is prodigiously pretty; who are these ruffles for?

Lady Med. My lord, to be sure——Where is Sir Harry this morning? I have not seen him yet.

Lady Flut. Dear Lady Medway, don't ask me about him, for I know nothing of him.

Lady Med. What, not of your husband, my dear! Well, well, Lady Flutter, when your young necks are a little more inured to the marriage yoke, I hope it will sit easier on you both.——This work blinds me, I'll lay it by.

Lady Flut. Oh, impossible! he grows worse and worse every day. There never was such an incorrigible, ill-natured thing in the universe.

Lady Med. Now, really, there I must differ from you; I never took Sir Harry to be ill-natured; hasty and petulant, I grant you, he is.

Lady Flut. Madam, I hope you will allow me to be the best judge.

Lady Med. You have reason to be so, I own; but a stander-by may form an opinion.

Lady Flut. I don't know what your ladyship's opinion may be; but I am sure it is the opinion of others, and some that I could name of undoubted good judgement, that there never was, since the creation, a woman so unfortunate in a husband as I am.

Lady Med. Oh, Lord Medway, what have you to answer for! [*Aside.*] I must say, Lady Flutter, that if it even were so (which, Heaven knows, is far from being the case), they are not your friends, no more

than Sir Harry's, who would endeavour to persuade you to such a belief.

" *Lady Flut.* Bless me, ma'am! Why, isn't it vi-
" sible to all the world? Doesn't all the town ring of
" his ridiculous behaviour, and wonder at my pa-
" tience in bearing it?

" *Lady Med.* Indeed, Lady Flutter, I believe you
" are mistaken. The town have something else to
" mind beside little domestic quarrels that no way
" concern them; and I dare say, nobody but your
" particular friends trouble their heads about it.
" Though, I must observe, that had both you and
" Sir Harry been a little less communicative, even to
" some of your friends, on the subject of your dis-
" agreement, it might have been happier for you."

Lady Flut. Oh, dear ma'am! I know there are some tame wives in the world, who can submit in silence to any usage; but I am not one of those, I assure you. I have not been used to controll, nor I won't be controlled, that's more.

Lady Med. Softly, dear Lady Flutter, I don't mean to offend you; I would argue with you as a friend. Pray speak lower; I would not have any of our servants hear on what subject we are discoursing.

Lady Flut. Gracious! why, every servant in the house knows how we live.

Lady Med. But, madam, don't you think your unguarded complaints without doors, and perhaps your unadvised choice of confidants within, may lead you into some inconvenience?

Lady Flut. I don't well understand your question, Lady Medway; my choice of confidants within——

Lady Med. Yes—male ones, I mean; for example now, if a young married lady should make choice of a gentleman, to whom she should open her heart, and let him so far into her confidence as to tell him she despises her husband, what do you think must be the consequence?

Lady Flut. What! why, I suppose he'd think—he'd imagine—I don't know what he'd think——

Lady Med. I'll tell you; he'd think, perhaps, that a liking to him had as great a share in the lady's contempt for her husband, as any real fault of the husband's.

Lady Flut. If he thought so, I could not help it; but I am sure there is no one to whom I complain will draw any such inference.

Lady Med. There is nothing but what is very natural in all this, Lady Flutter; and the gentleman, on this supposition, will think himself bound to make an offer of his love to the lady; she, perhaps, receives it——

Lady Flut. Lord, ma'am! these sre strange conclusions——What can she mean?

Lady Med. If this should be the case, what must ensue! Oh, Lady Flutter, an innocent young creature, like you, should start at the thought.

Lady Flut. Upon my word, Lady Medway, I don't understand such insinuations. If Sir Harry insults me, I am not obliged to bear it from every one.

Lady Med. I am sorry, madam, that you construe a friendly caution into an insult. I am your friend, perhaps the only one who has the power of saving you from destruction.

Lady Flut. Destruction! Madam, I could not have expected this from you, in your own house. I believe my lord would not thank you for treating me thus—but if you are tired of me, madam——

Lady Med. Oh, my dear madam! you are in a very great error, my lord is the greatest enemy you have in the world.

Lady Flut. You may happen to be mistaken in that, Lady Medway, as well as in other things.——Poor woman, she little knows——— [*Aside.*

Lady Med. Come, not to play at cross-purposes with you any longer, I must tell you that I am no stranger to my lord's designs on you——

Lady Flut. His designs on me!

Lady Med. Yes, madam, his cruel, his (I grieve to say) infamous designs on you. Oh, Lady Flutter, you stand on a dreadful precipice! do not reject the kind hand that would snatch you from certain ruin.

Lady Flut. This is such extraordinary language, Lady Medway, that really——I don't know what to say to it—I little imagined I should have created any jealousy when I came into your family.

Lady Med. Indeed, my dear, you intirely mistake my motive. I own there was a time when I might have been influenced by jealousy, but I have outlived it; and am not now actuated by so selfish a passion.

Pity to your inexperienced youth, friendship to your worthy parents, regard to the honour of your husband, joined to the tenderness and duty I owe my lord, are the sole motives which urge me to save you all, if possible from ruin. I know my lord makes love to you; and that you have, unwarily, been drawn in to make an assignation with him.

Lady Flut. If he has been so treacherous as to tell this!

Lady Med. He has not, I assure you; yet I am certain of the fact; I know too well the nature of his connections with Lady Lovegrove—And now, my dear, if you would escape the snare which is laid for your undoing, be advised by me, who am your true friend.

Lady Flut. I don't think I have a friend in the world.

Lady Med. You are mistaken; I am sincerely so. My lord is a man of pleasure, and is perhaps less scrupulous in affairs of gallantry, than in any other vice. Your youth and agreeable person were alone sufficient to attract him; but when superadded to this, he found you despised your husband, and made no difficulty of owing it to him, it almost amounted to an invitation.

Lady Flut. An invitation, Lady Medway! you use me very ill.

Lady Med. To a man of his cast, madam, it certainly does. Your unacquaintedness with men of intrigue makes you blind to your own danger; but indeed, Lady Flutter, there is but one step between you

and inevitable shame and misery. What do you think must be the consequence, if Sir Harry should discover that you have appointed a private place of meeting with my lord? What must he think of the nature of a correspondence thus meanly carried on by stealth? Ask your own heart if you can justify this to your husband and to your friends?

Lady Flut. Lord bless me, Lady Medway!—you terrify me—I am amazed how you came to the knowledge of this.

Lady Med. 'Tis a happiness to you, madam, that I have, if by it I can be the means of saving you.

Lady Flut. I own I was a fool for consenting; but sure, madam, you won't be so barbarous as to tell Sir Harry; it would give him such an advantage over me, I cannot bear the thoughts of it.

Lady Med. Why really, my dear, I should be sorry to be under the necessity of taking so disagreeable a step; and if I thought I could rely on your honour and discretion in your future conduct, I certainly should keep your secret.

Lady Flut. Madam, I'll quit your house directly, if that will satisfy you.

Lady Med. By no means, madam; how would you answer that to your friends, if they should inquire the reason? Here you came to town to stay the winter with me, and before a month's elapsed you quit my house!

Lady Flut. Why I can tell them that Sir Harry is so insufferable, I cannot live with him.

Lady Med. If you will be ruled by me, Lady Flutter, for one week, nay but for three days, I'll engage that Sir Harry and you shall be as happy a couple as any in England.

Lady Flut. Oh, gracious! you could as soon convert us into angels.

Lady Med. But will you promise to be guided by me, but for a little while?

Lady Flut. Oh, dear Lady Medway, I know you would recommend patience and submission, and all that; but I never can, nor never will submit to his humour.

Lady Med. Why then, madam, I shall think it my duty to write to your father immediately, and let him know the danger of your situation; "for though I "am sure the parting you from your husband would "afflict him, yet 'tis better he should receive you "while you are innocent."

Lady Flut. What is it you would have me do, madam?

Lady Med. Your task is not hard, if you are disposed to set about it. You are married to a very young man, Lady Flutter; who, though he is warm and volatile, does not want sense, and am sure is good-natured in the main.

Lady Flut. Dear Lady Medway—you are enough to turn one's brain.

Lady Med. Hear me out, madam. You, on the other hand, who have as much sense, and as much good-nature as he, are at the same time a little too

quick and impatient of contradiction. He, I will allow, is too ready to give offence; but you in your turn must grant, that you are as sudden in taking it. Now, my dear, 'tis in your power, and give me leave to tell you, 'tis your duty also to correct yours. And I'll answer for it that Sir Harry will follow your lead; for I am sure that he loves you a great deal better than my lord does, let him tell you what he pleases.

Lady Flut. I wish I could see any proofs of it.

Lady Med. Will you make the experiment?

Lady Flut. What, and give up to him?

Lady Med. Only for once, just for a trial: if he does not receive it as he ought, I will never desire you to repeat it—I think I hear his rap at the door.

Lady Flut. Well, madam, to shew you that it is not my fault that we live so uneasily, I will do as you would have me; you yourself shall be the judge; but then remember you are not to write to my papa.

Lady Med. I will not, and remember you are not to have any private conferences with my lord.

Lady Flut. Agreed.

Enter Sir HARRY FLUTTER.

Sir H. Flut. How does your ladyship do this morning? [*To Lady* Medway.] I am tired to death, I have been at my banker's, and jolting all over the detestable city.——Defend me! Why your head is dressed so barbarously, Lady Flutter, you look like ten furies; by my life, an absolute Medusa; pr'ythee who gave thee that formidable appearance, child?

Lady Flut. I am sorry you don't like it, Sir Harry; I'll not employ that Frenchman any more.

Sir H. Flut. Then I am sure you don't like it yourself; for Sir Harry's judgment has not the happiness of having any great weight with you.

Lady Flut. No, I protest I think it quite becoming and genteel.

Lady Med. Then it must be to oblige you, Sir Harry.

Sir H. Flut. Undoubtedly, ma'am, that's her study.

Lady Flut. Upon my word, Sir Harry, I would make it so, if you would let me.

Sir H. Flut. My dear! say that over again pray; it sounds vastly pretty, if it were but true.

Lady Flut. Why then seriously I would rather dress to please you than any body.

Sir H. Flut. Hark'e, Lady Flutter, irony is a mighty ticklish weapon, and you handle it very aukwardly, upon my soul; lay it by, or you'll cut your fingers.

Lady Flut. I declare and vow I am in earnest.

Sir H. Flut. Oh, dear ma'am, your most obedient—but you're a bungler, take my word for it.

Lady Med. But, Sir Harry, why should you doubt that Lady Flutter is serious?

Sir H. Flut. Why really, ma'am, because I never knew Lady Flutter serious in any thing, but her endeavours to make herself disagreeable to me.

Lady Med. In which I fancy however she has not succeeded, Sir Harry.

Lady Flut. If that be the case, then I am resolved to take another course, and try what my endeavours to please him will do.

Lady Med. What do you say to that Sir Harry?

Sir H. Flut. Say! 'gad, I don't well know what to say to it. There is something devilish pleasant in hearing her talk so, if the humour would but last.

Lady Med. Take my word for it, Sir Harry, it will be your own fault if it does not.

Sir H. Flut. Faith, ma'am, I should be glad to keep up the ball as long as I could.

Lady Flut. Indeed, indeed, Sir Harry, I will never quarrel with you again.

Sir H. Flut. Upon your honour.

Lady Flut. Upon my honour.

Sir H. Flut. Nor I with you, upon my soul—And shall we grow fond of one another.

Lady Flut. Immensely.

Sir H. Flut. Agreed—I'll never find fault with any thing you do.

Lady Flut. Nor I with any thing you say.

Sir H. Flut. I'll never contradict you.

Lady Flut. Nor I you.

Sir H. Flut. Sweet rogue!

Lady Flut. My dear Sir Harry.

[*He takes her hand and kisses it.*

Lady Med. Well, now is not this charming? I congratulate you both on your happiness, and leave you to the enjoyment of it. [*Exit Lady* Medway.

Sir H. Flut. Duce take me but I should think you

prodigious agreeable, if you were always in good humour.

Lady Flut. And, upon my life, I should think the same of you.

Sir H. Flut. How came we not to discover this sooner?

Lady Flut. Because we never tried to find it out. Lady Medway was the first that told me we might be happy if we pleased.

Sir H. Flut. Faith then she has more sagacity than my lord; for he was of a contrary opinion, and used to pity me of all things.

Lady Flut. For what?

Sir H. Flut. For being married to you.

Lady Flut. Really!

Sir H. Flut. Truth, upon my word.

Lady Flut. I see his treachery. [*Aside.*] Then, Sir Harry, I will convince him of his error, by making the best wife in the world, in spite of him.

Sir H. Flut. Charming creature! I shall grow too fond of you—I won't let you be so engaging, hussy—

Lady Flut. You shall tho'——

Enter Lord MEDWAY, *who stops on seeing Sir* HARRY.

Sir H. Flut. Pray, my lord, come in—I have a sad complaint to make to you. This is certainly the most perverse girl——

Lord Med. Oh, Sir Harry, this is the old story—I won't hear what you have to say.

Sir H. Flut But, my lord, this is a new, a quite

spick and span new affair. She has taken such a resolution!

Lord Med. Not to part I hope!

Sir H. Flut. No, no, my lord, a much stranger thing.

Lord Med. Ay! what can that be?

Sir H. Flut. You will be amazed when I tell you—We were disputing about it when you came in——

Lord Med. I am sorry, Sir Harry, to find you always in disputes with your lady. I wish from my heart I could compose your differences——

Sir H. Flut. Oh, she is the very spirit of contradiction, my lord.

Lady Flut. Depend upon it, Sir Harry, I'll have my own way in this.

Lord Med. And in every thing else, I'll be sworn.

[*Aside to Sir* Harry.

Sir H. Flut. You must not.

Lady Flut. I will.

Lord Med. That's right. [*Aside to Lady* Flutter.] What's the matter in debate?

Sir H. Flut. Why, my lord, 'tis the oddest thing in the world; she is resolved right or wrong, in spite of all I can say—to be very good—and make me love her whether I will or not—Don't you think that is monstrously provoking?

Lady Flut. And he, my lord, has taken up as unaccountable a design—of never contradicting me in any thing——Is not that as provoking?

Sir H. Flut. A'n't we a couple of fools, my lord?

Lord Med. Why really, Sir Harry—if this could be —I cannot say—I am sure I sincerely wish to see you both on good terms—and if you have found out a way —with all my heart.

[*Sir* H. Flut. *and Lady* Flut. *both burst out a laughing.*

Lord Med. I am glad to see you so merry, my young gentry—I wish it may last, that's all.——Sir Harry, I have a word to say to you—Why, you are undone, man, if once you let her turn matters to ridicule.

[*Aside to Sir* H. Flut.

Sir H. Flut. Oh, my lord, you are quite mistaken, all this is serious. [*Aside to Lord* Med.

Lady Flut. Come, I'll have no plotting.

Lord Med. Poh, poh! she will get the better of you, I see—[*Aside to Sir* H. Flut.] Let me speak to her—— Lady Flutter!—— [*Advances towards her.*

Lady Flut. The tables are turned, my lord; I'll whisper with nobody but Sir Harry,

Lord Med. But two words——When shall we meet?

[*Aside.*

Lady Flut. Never—[*Aside to Lord* Med.] Sir Harry, now that you intend to be very fond of me, I desire that you will grow a little jealous, and tell my lord, that he must not come into my dressing-room in a morning.

Sir H. Flut. Faith, my lord, that's true; I begin not to relish the Spartan scheme as well as I did.

Lord Med. Mighty fine! this is an extraordinary metamorphosis, if it holds—but of that I own I have some doubt.

Lady Flut. You need not fear, my lord—We have your good wishes that it should, I know.

Lord Med. That's home. [*Aside.*

Lady Flut. Come, Sir Harry, I want to go to an auction this morning; will you be so good as to give me your company?

Sir H. Flut. With all my heart, my dear, I'll attend you; and see here I received all this to-day! [*Takes out a purse which she snatches from him.*] Oh, you little plunderer! give me a kiss for it—I'll have another———

Lady Flut. Go, you extortioner!—day, day, my lord. [*They go out romping together.*

Lord Med. What can be the meaning of all this? damned little coquet—So much art at her years!—or is it owing to my wife's interposition?—Yet she knew not of my design.——Any way I am ashamed to be baffled so ridiculously—And that puppy, Sir Harry, too———

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Sir Anthony Branville's come to wait on your lordship.

Lord Med. Shew him into my study.—Here's another fool that don't know his own mind; but I'll fix him one way or other if I can.

SCENE II.

Changes to Lord MEDWAY's *Study. Enter Sir* ANTHONY BRANVILLE *and Lord* MEDWAY, *meeting.*

Lord Med. Sir Anthony, I am glad to see you; I was really in great pain for you yesterday, when I was obliged to leave you in the magic circle of Mrs. Knightly's charms: I wish you joy of your escape.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, I humbly thank you; 'tis a felicity to me, I acknowledge; for, my lord, there never was such a Syren, such a Circe!—Sylla and Charybdis (of whom we read in fable) were harmless innocents to her!—but heaven be praised, I am my own man again.—And now, my lord, I am come, agreeably to the intimation I gave you before, to make a most respectful offering of my heart, to the truly deserving and fair lady, Louisa.

Lord Med. Sir Anthony, I have already told you I shall be proud of your alliance, and my daughter, I make no doubt, is sensible of your worth!—Therefore, Sir Anthony, the shorter we make the wooing—women are slippery things—you understand me.

Sir A. Bran. Your lordship's insinuation, though derogatory to the honour of the fair sex (which I very greatly reverence) has, I am apprehensive, a little too much veracity in it. I have found it so to my cost:—for, would you believe it, my lord, this cruel woman (Mrs. Knightly, I mean, begging her pardon for the epithet) is the eighth lady to whom I have made sin-

cere, humble, and passionate love, within the space of these last thirteen years.

" *Lord Med.* You surprise me, Sir Anthony; is it " possible that a gentleman of your figure and accom- " plishments could be rejected by so many?

" *Sir A. Bran.* I do not positively affirm, my lord, " that I was rejected by them all; no, my lord, that " would have been a severity not to be survived.

" *Lord Med.* How was it then?

" *Sir A. Bran.* Blemishes, my lord, foibles, imper- " fections in the fair ones, which obliged me (though " reluctantly) to withdraw my heart.

" *Lord Med.* Ho, ho! why then the fault was yours, " Sir Anthony, not theirs.

" *Sir A. Bran.* I deny that, my lord, with due sub- " mission to your better judgment, it was their fault; " for the truth is, I never could get any of them to " be serious. There is a levity, my lord, a kind of " (if I may so call it) instability, which runs through " the gentler sex (whom, nevertheless, I admire) " which I assure you has thus long deterred me from " wedlock.

" *Lord Med.* Then, Sir Anthony, I find you have " been peculiarly unfortunate in the ladies whom you " have addressed.

" *Sir A. Bran.* Supremely so, my lord; for, not- " withstanding that they all received my devoirs most " indulgently, yet I do not know how it was, in the " long run, they either absolutely refused making me

" happy, or else were so extremely unguarded in " their conduct, even before my face, that I thought " I could not, consistently with honour, confer the " title of Lady Branville on any one of them."

Lord Med. Your lot has been a little hard, I must confess. I hope, however, that honour has been reserved by fate for my daughter. She is your ninth mistress, Sir Anthony, and that, you know, is a propitious number.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, I take the liberty of hoping so too; and that she is destined to recompence me for the disappointments and indignities I have received from the rest of womankind.

Lord Med. Why then, Sir Anthony, I suppose I may now present you to her in the character of a lover.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, I pant for that happiness.

Lord Med. I'll call her, Sir Anthony——

Sir A. Bran. As your lordship pleases——but, my lord, this widow Knightly——

Lord Med. Was there ever such a phlegmatic blockhead! [*Aside.*] What of her, Sir Anthony?

Sir A. Bran. I own I loved her better than any of her predecessors in my heart.—Matters indeed had gone farther between us, for, my lord, (not to injure a lady's reputation) I must tell you a secret——I have more than once pressed her hand with these lips.

Lord Med. Really!

Sir A. Bran. Fact, upon my veracity; I hope your lordship don't think me vain: " and as she had in-

"dulged me such lengths, could I be censured for "raising my wishes to the possession of this beauty?"

Lord Med. By no means, Sir Anthony; but then her ill behaviour to you——

Sir A. Bran. Oh, my lord, it has blotted, and, as I may say, totally erased her image from my breast—

Lord Med. Well, sir, I'll bring my daughter to you, whose image, I hope, will supply hers in your breast. [*Exit.*

Sir A. Bran. I hope this tender fair one will not be too easily won—that would debase the dignity of the passion, and deprive me of many delightful hours of languishment.—There was a time when a lover was allowed the pleasure of importuning his mistress, but our modern beauties will scarce permit a man that satisfaction. Pray Heaven, my intended bride may not be one of those—If it should prove so, I tremble for the consequences;——but here she comes—the condescending nymph approaches.

Enter LOUISA, *led in by Lord* MEDWAY.

Lord Med. Louisa, you are no stranger to Sir Anthony Branville's merit.

Sir A. Bran. Oh, my lord! [*Bowing low.*

Lord Med. That he is a gentleman of family and fortune, of most unblemished honour, and very uncommon endowments.

Sir A. Bran. Oh, my good lord, ordinary, slight accomplishments.

Lord Med. You are therefore to think yourself happy in being his choice preferably to any other lady. And now, Sir Anthony, I'll leave you to pursue your good fortune. [*Exit Lord* Medway.

Lou. Sir, won't you please to sit?

Sir A. Bran. Miss Medway, madam—having obtained my lord your father's permission, I humbly presume to approach you in the delightful hope, that after having convinced you of the excess of my love—

Lou. I hope, Sir Anthony, you will allow me a reasonable time for this conviction!

Sir A. Bran. Madam, I should hold myself utterly abandoned if I were capable at the first onset (notwithstanding what passes here) of urging a lady on so nice a point.

Lou. I thank you, sir; but I could expect no less from a gentleman whom all the world allows to be the very pattern of decorum.

Sir A. Bran. 'Tis a character, madam, that I have always been ambitious of supporting, whatever struggles it may cost me from my natural fervor; for let me tell you, madam, a beautiful object is a dangerous enemy to decorum.

Lou. But your great prudence, Sir Anthony, leaves me no room to suspect——

Sir A. Bran. I am obliged to call it to my aid I do assure you, madam; for spite of the suggestions of passion, I by no means approve of those rash and impetuous lovers, who, without regard to the delicacy of the lady, would, (having obtained consent) as it

were rush at once into her arms, you'll pardon me, madam, for so grossly expressing my idea.

Lou. Oh, Sir Anthony, I am charmed with your notions, so refined! so generous! and I must add (though it may appear vain) so correspondent with my own.

Sir A. Bran. Madam, I am transported to hear you say so! I am at this minute in an absolute ecstacy! Will you permit me, dear madam, the rsvishing satisfaction of throwing myself at your feet?

Lou. By no means, Sir Anthony; I could not bear to see a gentleman of your dignity in so humble a posture; I will suppose it done if you please.

Sir A. Bran. I prostrate myself in imagination, I assure you, madam.

Lou. Now, Sir Anthony, as you see my papa is impatient for the honour of being related to you, and that I am bound to an implicit obedience, I am afraid, unless your prudence interposes, that we shall both be hurried into wedlock, with a precipitancy very inconsistent with propriety.

Sir A. Bran. I declare, madam, I am of your ladyship's opinion, and am almost apprehensive of the same thing——

Lou. How is this to be avoided, sir?

Sir A. Bran. Be assured, madam, I too well know what is due to virgin modesty, to proceed with that rapidity, which my lord (with whom I have not the honour of agreeing in this particular) seemeth to recommend.

" *Lou.* You are very kind, Sir Anthony.

" *Sir A. Bran.* Oh, madam, I should pay but an ill
" compliment to your transcending merit, if I did not
" think it worth sighing for a considerable time longer,
" I assure you."

Lou. That's very noble in you, Sir Anthony—— So passionate! and yet so nice—if all lovers were but like you!

Sir A. Bran. The world I will presume to say would be the better, madam—but then I hope your rigours will not extend too far, my dear lady—a few months or so—longer than that I should be very near tempted to call cruel, I can tell you.

Lou. " As my passionate lover seems so well dis-
" posed to wait, I may chance to escape him. [*Aside.*]
Your extraordinary merit, Sir Anthony, will undoubtedly shorten your time of probation—Meanwhile as I hinted to you before, that my papa is rather in haste to call you son, I would not have him imagine that I give any delay to this union. He may call my duty in question, which he expects should keep pace with his own wishes—you apprehend me, sir?

" *Sir A. Bran.* Perfectly, my dear madam, and if
" I may presume to interpret what you have so
" charmingly insinuated to my apprehension, you
" would have me just hint to my lord, that you are
" not quite averse to honouring me with your fair
" hand.

" *Lou.* That I am ready to do so, if you please,
" Sir Anthony.

" *Sir A. Bran.* Very good, but at the same time I " shall give him to understand that I am not as yet " intitled to receive that very great happiness.

" *Lou.* To that purpose, sir, for I would not have " this necessary delay appear to be of my choosing.

" *Sir A. Bran.* You little know, madam, the vio- " lence I do myself to repress the ardor of my " flames; but patience is a prime virtue in a lover, " and Scipio himself never practised self-denial with " more success than I have done.

" *Lou.* I rely entirely on your discretion, Sir An- " thony, to manage this affair with my papa."

Sir A. Bran. Oh, madam, I shall convince my lord, that it is from very sublime motives I submit to postpone my felicity.

Lou. I am much obliged to you, Sir Anthony, for this generous proof of your passionate regard to me.

Sir A. Bran. You'll find, madam, I do not love at the ordinary rate—but I must not indulge myself too long on the tender subject. I doubt it is not safe.

Lou. [*Rising.*] Sir, I won't detain you.

Sir A. Bran. I must absolutely tear myself from you, madam, for gazing on so many charms I may grow unmindful of the danger.

Lou. Sir, I will no longer trespass on your time.

Sir A. Bran. I must fly, madam, lest I should be tempted to transgress those rigid bounds I have prescribed to myself.

Lou. Sir, you have my consent to retire.

Sir A. Bran. I am so overpowered with transport, madam, that I hold it necessary to withdraw.——

Lou. 'Tis the best way, sir.

Sir A. Bran. Dear madam, vouchsafe one gracious smile to your adorer.

Lou. Sir Anthony, your humble servant.

[*Smiles and curtsies.*

Sir A. Bran. Madam, your most devoted—oh dawning of ecstatic bliss! [*Exit.*

Lou. Ha, ha, ha! I think I may now go, and very safely assure my papa, that I am ready to take my adorer when ever he pleases—this is fortunate beyond hopes. [*Exit.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Study. Enter Lord MEDWAY *alone, reading.*

Lord Medway.

THERE'S nothing good or ill but by comparison—Confound your dry maxims, what are they good for? [*He throws away the book.*] Yet there is some truth in that too.—Yesterday I thought myself an unhappy man—but what am I this morning? So much worse, that when I compare the two conditions, I now think I was happy yesterday—" My affairs are in a hope-" ful condition truly! Ruined in my fortune, jilted by " my mistress, disobeyed by my son, insulted by my " wife's superior worth; and last night (thanks to " my dear indulgent stars!) to sum up all, I was

" forced to pawn the only stake I had left, my ho-
" nour; which when I shall redeem, Heaven knows."
—All is now lost; and if my son continues obstinate-
ly to refuse this match, I am irretrievably undone.—
" What can these chits want?"

" *Enter Sir* HARRY *and Lady* FLUTTER, *arm in arm.*

" *Sir H. Flut.* My lord, I am in the greatest sur-
" prise in the world!

" *Lord Med.* At what, Sir Harry?

" *Sir H. Flut.* At something my wife here has told
" me!

" *Lord Med.* Sure she has not blabbed! [*Aside.*]
" What is it?

" *Lady Flut.* Something of your lordship, I can tell
" you.

" *Lord Med.* Of me, ma'am! I hope I have done
" nothing, ma'am, that——that deserves censure.

" *Sir H. Flut.* 'Egad, my lord, you have though,
" and very severe censure too.

" *Lord Med.* Sir Harry, I am ready to answer any
" charge against me.

" *Lady Flut.* Ha, ha, ha! neither Sir Harry nor I
" come to challenge you, my lord.

" *Sir H. Flut.* Ha, ha, ha! faith my lord looks as
" grave as if he were afraid of it though.

" *Lord Med.* Afraid of it, Sir Harry! pray change
" that word for a better.

" *Lady Flut.* I vow, my lord, you look as if you

" had a mind to beat us both——does not he, Sir
" Harry?

" *Lord Med.* Sir Harry, I have really some serious
" business on my hands, and should be glad if you
" would dispatch what you have got to say.

" *Sir H. Flut.* What I have to say, my lord; why
" all the world have it to say, as well as I.

" *Lord Med.* What is it, pr'ythee?

" *Sir H. Flut.* Why, that you are going to force
" Miss Medway to marry an old hero in tapestry
" hanging.

" *Lord Med.* Is that all!

" *Sir H. Flut.* All! and enough too in conscience,
" I think; why what the deuce, my lord, it is the jest
" of the town already, Lady Flutter and I have so
" laughed at the thoughts of it this morning. We
" call him the knight of the inflexible countenance.

" [*Here Sir* Harry *and Lady* Flutter *burst out a laughing.*

" *Lord Med.* Oh! I am mighty glad to see you so
" much of one mind.

" *Lady Flut.* My lord, as we are intirely indebted
" to your good offices for that union, I am sure it must
" give you pleasure.

" *Sir H. Flut.* Sarcastical gipsey! but come, we
" won't banter his lordship about it; he meant us
" well, I believe, though he was a little out in his
" politics—for faith, my lord, I think she is much
" the better since I have given her her own way.

" *Lord Med.* I am glad of it, sir.——Have you any
" thing farther to offer?

" *Lady Flut.* Nothing but our good advice, my lord;
" as we have received so much from you, I think we
" owe you some in return; and, I am sure, if you
" would take time, you would not think of my uncle
" for a son-in-law.

" *Sir H. Flut.* Oh fie, fie! ridiculous to the last de-
" gree.

" *Lady Flut.* Positively, my lord, I won't give
" consent.

" *Lord Med.* I suppose your uncle's at age, ma'am.

" *Lady Flut.* Oh la! he has been that these hundred
" years.

" *Lord Med.* Why then——excuse me, I am not at
" present in a humour to trifle.

" *Lady Flut.* But we are, my lord; an't we, Sir Harry?

" *Sir H. Flut.* Oh eternally, my dear.

" *Lord Med.* Be so good, then, as to enjoy it with-
" out my participation—I am really busy.

" *Lady Flut.* Come, Sir Harry. He's so splenetic,
" there's no bearing him. Let's go and laugh by
" ourselves.

" *Sir H. Flut.* Oh there's no pleasure like it!

" *Lady Flut.* My lord could tell us of others, I war-
" rant; well, don't look so cross; we'll dance at the
" wedding, if it must be a match.

" *Sir H. Flut.* I dare say your uncle will have
" jousts and tournaments; I'll learn to handle a tar-
" get, my lord, against the time.

" *Lady Flut.* My lord don't think us worthy of an " answer, so we will leave him to his wise reflections.

[*Exeunt laughing.*

" *Lord Med.* A couple of impertinents.—He alarm-" ed me at first, but I find she is too cunning to tell " him all."

Enter Colonel MEDWAY.

Col. Med. I met Sir Anthony just going to my sister, my lord; I suppose matters are in a favourable train between them.

Lord Med. He is such an out-of-the-way fellow, there is no knowing what to make of him; he has been with me, and quite tired me with his romantic absurdity; but I think it will be a match. Your sister has at last condescended to accept of him for a husband.

Col. Med. I am glad of it, my lord, since it is a thing you wished.

Lord Med. I thank you, son.

Col. Med. Something has ruffled you, my lord.

Lord Med. I have an affair, George, that lies heavy on my spirits—'Tis in your power, and I think—I hope, at least—in your inclination, to extricate me from the greatest difficulty in which I was ever yet involved.

Col. Med. My lord, you know you may command me; I am ready to hazard my life for your service, if it be any thing of that nature.

Lord Med. No, no, no; I am not so old, Medway,

as to require the assistance of your sword.——You mistake my meaning quite.

Col. Med. You seem moved, my lord—[*Lord* Medway *walks about*] pray explain yourself.

Lord Med. Faith, son, I am almost ashamed to tell you the distress I have brought both upon myself and you.

Col. Med. Dear, my lord, don't think of me in the case.

Lord Med. Last night, George, I lost two thousand pounds, which I was obliged to pay this morning, and my honour is engaged for almost as much more.

Col. Med. My lord, I thought you had determined never to venture on such deep play again.

Lord Med. I had so; but something happened yesterday that vexed and disconcerted me, and I went to the old set, just to amuse myself for an hour; but I don't know how it was——they drew me in for half the night.

Col. Med. My lord, I am exceedingly concerned; but what can I do now?

Lord Med. Why there's the point—I am very loth to revive a subject, that I know is disagreeable to you; but you see to what distress I am driven—there is but one way left.—You remember what we talk'd of yesterday; if my curst ill fortune had not pursued me last night, I thought never to have mentioned it to you again.

Col. Med. My lord, I flattered myself you never would.

Lord Med. I thought I should not have occasion. I had another thing in view; but this last blow has crushed all my hopes at once.

Col. Med. Is it not practicable, my lord, to devise some other way?

Lord Med. Oh, impossible! I am overwhelmed with debts, and worried like a stag at bay; but with regard to this last, for which my honour's pawned, I must be speedy in the means of payment.

Col. Med. Indeed, my lord, I am exceedingly shocked at what you tell me.

Lord Med. And is that all I am to expect from you? Look ye, Medway, it does not become a father to entreat a son; neither is it suitable to your age, or the character you bear in life, to be threatened, like a sniveling girl, with parental authority; mine is impotent, for I have nothing left to bestow; but as you would wish to prosper hereafter, save your father from disgrace, your mother (a good one she has been to you) from penury.

Col. Med. My lord, I call Heaven to witness I would give up my life to preserve you both; but you require what is infinitely more precious!

Lord Med. Oh, fie! fie upon it! how like a woman this is!—Your sister, a romantic girl, could do no more than soothe me with fine speeches; I expected a more substantial proof of filial love from you.

Col. Med. My lord, you wound me deeply by such a cruel charge. What have I not already done to shew my duty, or, what with me was much stronger,

my love for you, my lord? Have I not given up my birth-right? put it wholly in your power to alienate for ever, if you please, my family inheritance, and leave me a beggar? Is not this a substantial proof? My lord, I beg your pardon; but you have wrung my very heart.

Lord Med. And you have wrung mine—for, Medway, with equal grief and shame I speak it, I have made you a beggar; I have mortgaged the last foot of land I was possessed of in the world, and the only prospect I had of redeeming it was by this lady's fortune; that would have recovered all, and restored you to the estate of your ancestors. I thought a boyish passion might have been overcome, when such important motives for it were united, as your own interest, and the honour of your family.

Col. Med. As for my own interest, my lord, it is but a feather in the scale; and for the rest, I think my own honour (which you yourself taught me to prize) is more concerned in this event, than that of my family can possibly be.

Lord Med. You told me you were not engaged by promise to the lady.

Col. Med. I am not, my lord; but are there no ties but what the law can vindicate? Oh, my lord, you forget the lessons you have given me on other occasions!

Lord Med. Well, well—I acknowledge the justness of your reproach; but it comes like a bearded arrow from a child's lips—But I have done—I give up the

cause—Had this affair, on which I had set my heart, succeeded, I should perhaps have been happier than I desire to be.——I had this morning been laying down a plan——but no matter, it is all over—I am sorry your mother should be a sufferer with me—I have not been the kindest husband—but I did intend, after I had seen you and my daughter settled, to have retired into the country on a moderate annuity; and there, Medway, I might perhaps have led a very different life from what you have been used to see; but I must struggle with ill-fortune as well as I can—You have been a worthy son, I acknowledge it—You have done enough—You shall not charge me with making you miserable for life.

Col. Med. Oh, my lord, I wish you had kept up your resentment; I cannot bear to hear you talk in this strain.

Lord Med. Why not, man? 'tis nothing but the truth.

Col. Med. My lord, I would do any thing to prevent——

Lord Med. What? Speak, George.

Col. Med. I cann't, my lord.

Lord Med. A father's ruin, you would say—I know the tenderness of your nature, Medway, and therefore I will not urge you; your father is not such a tyrant; I have always considered you as my friend.

Col. Med. My lord, to deserve that title still, I must not see you unhappy.

" *Lord Med.* Why willingly, I think you would not

"—nor would I make you so for the world—I have "already hurt you but too much. I will not wrong "you every way. I deserve the ruin I have brought "upon myself, and am content to sink under it.

"*Col. Med.* My lord, that must not be while I "have power to help it.

"*Lord Med.* I cannot ask it, son."

Col. Med. I'll give up all—even my love, to save you.

Lord Med. You cannot mean it, sure!

Col. Med. I'll do as you would have me.

Lord Med. What! marry Mrs. Knightly?

Col. Med. I will, my lord.

Lord Med. Give me your hand——Oh, George, what a triumph is yours!—You make me ashamed.

[*Breaks away.*

Col. Med. My lord, since your affairs are urgent, I will not trust to the wavering of my own heart; I will visit her this morning; but it will be proper first to apprise poor Miss Richly of this sudden change.

Lord Med. By all means; but take my advice, Medway, and do not trust yourself to see her. Write what you have to say, for sighs and tears are infectious things. But all, I hope, will soon blow over; and when you are married, you may then have it in your power to make her amends for the fortune she has lost.

Col. Med. Oh, my lord, you little know the heart of Clara, it is not in the power of riches to heal a

wounded mind! But I must not trust myself to think upon the subject; I'll write to her whilst my resolution's warm. If she lives and can forget me, 'tis all I dare to hope. [*Exit.*

Lord Med. Worthy creature! it almost goes against me to let him complete this match. Yet what other resource have I left? I hope this lady may make him happier than he expects—But I must haste and write to her directly, to request that as a favour, which I am sure she will think her greatest happiness. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Changes to Mrs. KNIGHTLY'*s House. Mrs.* KNIGHTLY, *as just coming in, giving her Capuchin, &c. to her Maid.*

Mrs. Knight. Has any one been here since I went out?

Maid. No, madam.

Mrs. Knight. Nor any letter or message?

Maid. Not that I know of, madam.

Mrs. Knight. Go and send Miss Richly to me. [*Exit Maid.*] What a mortifying situation am I in! to have made advances to a man, who, instead of stepping forward to receive them, shrinks back—— My Lord Medway, I know, would gladly promote a union between his son and me. The backwardness on his side then, can proceed from no other cause but a pre-engagement of his heart. Yet that may be got

over; but if (as I fear) my sister loves him, I must not come to any explanation with her; for whilst I seem ignorant of it, I am not obliged to compliment her at the expence of my own quiet——I begin to wish her out of my sight.

Enter Miss RICHLY.

Have you done the work I left with you, Clara?

Miss Rich. I did not imagine you had given it to me as a task, sister—I have done nothing to it yet.

Mrs. Knight. I cannot conceive what you have got into that head of yours, child; for of late you never do any thing that I desire—I think I never saw so strange an alteration.

Miss Rich. Excuse me, sister, the alteration is in you.

Mrs. Knight. Oh, your servant, ma'am, you have learnt to contradict too—but it would become you, Clara, to remember I am your elder sister; and though there is no great difference in our years, yet I think the state you are in should teach you a little more respect to me.

Miss Rich. Indeed, sister, I do not want to be hourly reminded of that; I am sufficiently humbled already.

Mrs. Knight. Upon my word, Clara, I believe you will find humility the most useful virtue you can practise; and that you may have a better opportunity of doing so, I have thought of placing you in a sober retired family in the country; and who knows but

you may captivate some rural squire, and then you may live according to your own taste, you know.

Miss Rich. I'll tell her at once to punish her for her cruelty. [*Aside.*] Perhaps, sister, I may have it in my power to do so without captivating a rural 'squire——

Mrs. Knight. I am glad to hear it; but we won't talk of your visionary schemes at present. I won't let her explain herself. [*Aside.*

Miss Rich. There is a gentleman, sister——

Mrs. Knight. Well, well, keep him to yourself; I'll hear none of your love-secrets.

Enter a Servant, and delivers a Note to Mrs. KNIGHTLY.

Serv. From my Lord Medway, madam; the servant waits for an answer.

Miss Rich. Lord Medway! what can this mean? [*Aside.*

Mrs. Knight. My compliments to his lordship, and shall be glad of the colonel's company. [*Exit Serv.*] You were going to say something of a gentleman, Clara, ha, ha, pray who is the gentleman? But before you tell me your secret, I'll entitle myself to the favour by making you my confidant. I have made a conquest, you must know, of which this billet informs me.

Miss Rich. A conquest, sister! I thought this note had come from Lord Medway.

Mrs. Knight. Why, so it does, and the conquest is

though not of Lord Medway, yet of one who, I hope, will be Lord Medway—I'll read you the note.

'MADAM,

'Tis sometimes as great a fault to be too modest 'as too bold; my son is charmed with you, yet durst 'not tell you so. I told him that I would, and even 'went so far as to promise him a favourable recep- 'tion. You see, madam, my credit as a man of sa- 'gacity is at stake on this occasion, and I am sure 'you have too much goodness to let me forfeit it. I 'flatter myself you will allow Colonel Medway the 'honour of kissing your hand. He will wait on you 'in half an hour, if you do not forbid him.

'I am, madam, &c.

'MEDWAY.

'P. S. I hope you will be alone.'

What do you say to this, Clara? Is your lover as pretty a fellow as Colonel Medway?

Miss Rich. Oh, sister, this is too much! but I give you joy.

Mrs. Knight. What's the matter, child! Why, surely, my dear Clara, thou couldst not have any design upon the colonel! Could you suppose that a man of family, like him, would marry without a fortune to support his rank and title?

Miss Rich. I am satisfied I was mistaken, madam, and shall now be obliged to you if you will send me into the country directly.

" *Mrs. Knight.* Why, really, my dear, I think you

" judge right. I am sorry you have been so impru-
" dent as to suffer any little gallantries, with which
" the colonel might have treated you, to take a se-
" rious hold on you; but since it has happened so
" unluckily, I own I think it will be rather aukward
" for you to be in the house on the occasion; for, to
" tell you the truth, I intend to marry him.

" *Miss Rich.* Then, sister, I will, if you please,
" retire for the present to the house of my friend
" who brought me up, till you are at leisure to dis-
" pose of me otherwise."

Mrs. Knight. You are perfectly right, my dear; I am pleased at this mark of your discretion—We don't part in anger, Clara; I shall always be your sincere friend, I assure you.

Miss Rich. I hope so, sister—I will just go and give a few directions to the servant, and then come to take my leave of you.

Mrs. Knight. You will not then be long in giving your orders, for I suppose you would not choose to meet the colonel here. Besides, you find, he desires to see me alone.

Miss Rich. I shall not interrupt you. [*Exit.*

Mrs. Knight. Poor Clara! I pity you, and am sorry to build my happiness on the ruin of yours; but I'll make you amends. I see she loves, but 'tis plain she is not beloved. Perhaps 'tis really as I said, and he has won her affections by a few compliments, meant only in *gaiete de cœur.* I hope that may be the case; for, notwithstanding my tenderness for him, I have

delicacy enough to be unhappy, if I did not wholly possess his heart.

Enter Maid, and gives Mrs. KNIGHTLY *a Letter.*

Why, this is for my sister!

Maid. Madam, you ordered they should all be brought to you. [*Exit Maid.*

Mrs. Knight. Oh, I had forgot—It is of no great consequence now; but let us see who this is from—George Medway! I am almost afraid to read it, but I will know the worst. [*Reads.*

'Within this hour, my Clara, the faithless despi-
'cable man, who called himself your lover, will sup-
'plicate your sister for her hand, and with a heart
'long devoted, and never, never to be recalled from
'you, offer mean, deceitful vows to her. (Heavens!
'what's this!) I know not what I write, for despair
'dictates to my trembling hand. Hate me, despise
'me, I conjure, (I wish I could do so too.) yet hear
"the reasons for this fatal change——"

Oh, this has given me an ague fit!

Enter Miss RICHLY.

Miss Rich. I am come now, sister, to bid you farewell. [*Mrs.* Knightly *rushes out of the room.*] Bless me, what can be the matter with my sister! she seems strangely agitated—she was reading a letter—it was not that which she just now shewed to me—What can it be? but I'll not intrude to ask her; I

believe she can dispense with the ceremony of an adieu, and I can depart without one.

As she is going out, Colonel MEDWAY *is shewn in by a Servant, both stop short, and look at each other.*

Col. Med. I did not expect this, Clara! I thought you would have spared me the pangs of such a meeting.

Miss Rich. It was not designed, sir, believe me; yet, if you had vouchsafed to have given me but a little notice of this visit, it would have been but kind.

Col. Med. I thought my letter, distracted as it was, would at least have prevented an interview.

Miss Rich. What letter?

Col. Med. Did not you receive one from me within this half hour? It was the earliest notice I could give you.

Miss Rich. I received none; but now you mention it, I am afraid it has fallen into my sister's hands.

Col. Med. If so, then, Clara, what a monster must I appear to you? ignorant as you are of the motives of my strange conduct, which in that letter I explained at full.

Miss Rich. Indeed I am but ill prepared for such a sudden shock—yet I am willing to believe you must have had strong reasons for what you have done.

Col. Med. Can the generosity of your heart admit it as an excuse for my leaving you, that it is to save

from utter and immediate ruin, a father that I dearly love?

Miss Rich. It can, sir, and honour you for the motive; for I am sure that nothing else could have brought about such an event; and I should little deserve that esteem which I hope you still retain for me, if I could not give up my feeble claim to your tenderness, for ties of so much more importance.

Col. Med. Oh, Clara, why did I give you up? what have I got to compensate for your loss?

Miss Rich. Your virtue! the consciousness of having acted right—You have broke no oaths, no promises to me; nay, I have often told you, I would never be yours but with your father's consent; for, sunk as I am in fortune, I would not meanly creep into a family that rejected me. And for this reason, I would neither give, nor receive a vow; but left you at full liberty to make a better choice, when your duty or your interest should urge you.

Col. Med. That last word, madam, carries a reproach in it, which I cannot bear from you.

Miss Rich. Do not mistake me, sir; I have not the least suspicion, that interest has the smallest share in this action—I wish it had—for then, perhaps, I should part with you with less reluctance, than now I own I have power to do.—But we must not touch upon this string—my sister loves you, and I hope will make you happy.

Col. Med. Happy, do you say! no, Clara, no, hap-

piness and I have shaken hands; what I have done to-day has made a wretch of me for life.

Miss Rich. Oh, sir, shew more indifference, if you would not have me repine too much at my own sad fate.

Col. Med. And what is mine then, Clara, condemned to losing what is dearer to me than life; with the superadded grief of giving up my days to one I cannot love. Your condition is not quite so wretched; you still are free, and time may incline you to bestow your heart upon some happy man.

Miss Rich. Never, never!

Col. Med. Do not say so—I had but that hope left to keep me from desperation; if I lose it, I shall forget all obligations, and give my father up to poverty and shame,

Miss Rich. No more, I beseech you, sir—you have made a noble sacrifice of your love—do not lose the merit of your filial goodness, by repenting of an act, that raises you higher even in my esteem.

Col. Med. Clara, the tears stand trembling in your eyes while you speak—pray, give them vent, for I am ashamed to weep alone. [*He turns from her.*

Miss Rich. See, mine are dispersed already.—Collect yourself, I beg of you, you have a noble character to sustain.——

Col. Med. Oh, Clara, I am unequal to the task!—I have no fortitude left——

Miss Rich. Think of your unhappy father, sir!—let that keep up your resolution. "I grant you have a

" difficult task; for my sister may possibly think her-
" self affronted, by the explanation you have made in
" that letter, which has fallen into her hands.

" *Col. Med.* I hope she may!

" *Miss Rich.* Nay, do not indulge in such a vain
" hope; 'tis but a surmise of mine, and may have
" nothing in it.——I know she suspected our attach-
" ment to each other, yet that did not check the pro-
" gress of her love."—I am going to quit her house directly; and this, sir, for my own, for my sister's, and for your sake, is the last time we must ever meet!——Forget me, sir, and try—I conjure you try—to be happy!—— [*Exit.*

Col. Med. Clara!—stay!—stay!——So! all's at an end!——and the hope I had nourished for many years, is vanished like a dream.——This trial was more than I thought I could support; but her noble firmness, I believe, made me ashamed to sink quite under the blow that parted us for ever—I wish I were out of this fatal house——for I am very unfit to act the lover's part.

Enter Lord MEDWAY.

Lord Med. How now, Medway! what's the meaning of this? alone, and with a countenance of despair! I bid you wear a better face. Where's Mrs. Knightly? have not you seen her yet? I thought, by this time, to have found you at her feet, and as I passed by the door, stepped in to help you to make love; for I know your heart is not warm in the business.

Col. Med. My lord, I am very glad you are come: you must, indeed, make love for me; for I assure you, I am in no condition to speak for myself.

Lord Med. Why, what's the matter, man? I suppose Miss Richly and you have been whining over one another: did not I warn you against that, George, and bid you write to her?

Col. Med. So I did, my lord; but, unfortunately, she did not receive my letter; so that, by accident, we met just now, not, I assure you, with the least design on either side.

Lord Med. That was unlucky; but how came she to miss of your letter?

Col. Med. By a circumstance still more unlucky, for she is afraid her sister got it.

Lord Med. What a curst untoward accident, if that be so; yet her love for you will make her overlook all this. 'Twas but a thing of course, mere gallantry. —I'll lead you to her, and turn it off.

Col. Med. I beg of you, my lord, to see her first alone; she does not know that I am come; the servant conducted me to this room, supposing she was here; and lucky it was for me that it happened otherwise:—her sister's presence so disconcerted me, that I should have acquitted myself but very ill towards her.

Lord Med. But she expects you by this time; a lover and out-stay his appointment! for shame, George!

Col. Med. Let me beseech your lordship to dispense

with my seeing her just now; I'll take a turn or two in the park, and endeavour to compose myself; and if my passion for her sister should be mentioned, you, my lord, can, with a better grace than I, give it what turn you please.

Lord Med. Well—perhaps it may be better so. I own I had rather she should speak of that to me than to you.—Get you gone quickly—I'll prepare the way for you—She admits me to her toilet.

[*Exeunt different ways.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

Lord MEDWAY'S *House.* *Enter Lord* MEDWAY.

Lord Medway.

BY what a strange fatality are all my actions governed!—Nothing that I can devise but what ends in disappointment and vexation.—Yet in this last instance, I ought to be thankful for my disappointment; for had my design been accomplished, into what a horrid gulph should I have plunged my children. It makes my blood run cold to think of it.——I was born for destruction, and the ruins I have made myself are now come tumbling on my head. No hope left for avoiding them—no prospect before me but disgrace. ——And the life of shame I have to look back on! To think how I have abused and perverted every gift bestowed on me for a blessing!——How I sicken at my own reflections.——

Enter Colonel MEDWAY.

George! What now, George?

Col. Med. My lord, I have been endeavouring to assume such a frame of mind, as will, I hope, enable me to go through with the task in which I have engaged. I am ready now to wait on Mrs. Knightly.

Lord Med. I——did not expect you back so soon.

Col. Med. I thought, my lord, the sooner I returned, it would be the more agreeable to you, as well as respectful to the lady.

Lord Med. Can you feel nothing more than respect for that lady, son?

Col. Med. My lord, you know I cannot. My heart is given to another. I must be unhappy, yet I hope I shall not make Mrs. Knightly so.

Lord Med. Poor woman!—she is already too much so.

Col. Med. Have you had any conversation with her, my lord?

Lord Med. I have.——You cannot be her husband.

Col. Med. I am willing, my lord, if the lady will accept of me.

Lord Med. You know not what you say.——Oh, George, George!—you will start when I tell you the strange discovery I have made.

Col. Med. What is it, my lord?

Lord Med. Mrs. Knightly——she to whom I would have joined you——I find is——

Col. Med. What?

Lord Med. Oh, Medway !—my own daughter.

Col. Med. You amaze me, my lord—how did you discover it ?

Lord Med. When I went so solicit for you, I found her in her closet, under great agitation, on account of the letter you had written to her sister.—I pleaded for you, but found her averse and cold.——In a little pause of discourse, I happened to cast my eyes on the picture of a lady, which hung just before me, and was struck with the resemblance of a beauty, whom, in my early days, I loved, and cruelly betrayed.

Col. Med. I remember, my lord, to have heard you speak of some such thing—a lady, who, when you made your first campaign in Portugal, gave you her love.

Lord Med. The same—I thought the injured countenance seemed to frown upon me. Surprized at the sight, I hastily demanded whose the picture was, and was told by Mrs. Knightly 'twas her mother's.

Col. Med. That must, indeed, my lord, have shocked you.

Lord Med. Oh' 'twas nothing to what I suffered after, when farther urging her to satisfy my curiosity, she told me her mother's name and family ! The apparent confusion this threw me into, roused her in her turn to ask me some questions, which brought about this amazing explanation.

Col. Med. She could not know you by name, my lord, as it was since my birth you assumed that with the title of Medway.

Lord Med. True.—She had heard of me by my own family name, and asked me, with a faltering voice, whether I had not formerly been at Lisbon, and borne the name of Selby. My acknowledging that I had, threw her into agonies, from which I, with difficulty, recovered her.

Col. Med. Did you never know, my lord, that you had a daughter by that lady?

Lord Med. Oh, no, no! I was recalled to England early in my amour with her. I married soon after my return, and, thoughtless and young as I then was, never inquired after her more.

Col. Med. How then, my lord, can you be certain of this fact?

Lord Med. Oh, Medway! by too sure an evidence—The penitence and deep remorse of a dying woman! The unhappy lady confessed the secret, with all its circumstances, to this her daughter, when she was on her death-bed.

Col. Med. Mrs. Knightly, then, had passed for Mr. Richly's daughter?

Lord Med. She had; the match between him and her mother was hastily concluded by her friends, immediately after my departure. At the time of this lady's birth, Mr. Richly was absent on his affairs in the Indies; and though she came into the world in less than seven months after the marriage, yet (this circumstance being carefully concealed from him) he never doubted of her being his own.

Col. Med. Poor Clara! she then has been doubly

wronged, in being deprived of her birth-right, as well as in losing the unequal portion which her father left her.

Lord Med. That was the cause which wrung the secret from her dying mother's breast. Her deceased husband had, through a partial fondness for his supposed eldest daughter, left her such a disproportionate share of his wealth; and the mother, in divulging the secret, charged Mrs. Knightly, with her last breath, to do justice to her sister. This she herself, in the hurry of her shame, surprise, and grief, acknowledged to me.

Col. Med. I long to know, my lord, what resulted from this extraordinary interview.

Lord Med. Mrs. Knightly's agitations are not to be described. She wept and wrung her hands. I mixed my tears with her's; and while she fell on her knees before me, I involuntarily dropped on one of mine, and begged of her to accept of a blessing from her repentant father. She strained me to her bosom; then rising with a noble air, she made a sorrowful and silent motion with her hand that I should leave her. I did so; and hastened home, to brood over my own reflections——Oh, such reflections, such reflections, George!

Col. Med. My lord, there is something so extraordinary in this event, that it looks as if Providence itself had interposed.

Lord Med. Oh, Medway, 'tis for your sake then; I do not deserve the care of Heaven!

Col. Med. I beg, my lord, you will not entertain such desponding thoughts, but hope the best.

Lord Med. George! there's no foundation here for hope; I want that within which should support me. It is not the flashiness of wit, or vanity of superior talents that can avail me in an hour like this. I'd give them all, nay, the whole world, were I master of it, to be possessed of such a virtuous self-acquitted heart as yours.

Col. Med. Your thinking thus, my lord, makes you almost the very man you wish to be.

Lord Med. Oh, George, George! words cannot describe the anguish which I feel. I should be resigned to it, did it concern myself only, as the just punishment of a life of folly and vice; but when I think of you and of your mother, I am distracted.

Enter Lady MEDWAY.

Lady Med. My dear! [*Lord* Medway *turns from her.*] Medway, why do you let your father sink thus under his apprehensions?

Col. Med. Do you speak to him, madam, he wants your tenderness to soothe the troubles of his mind.

Lady Med. My dear, you have no cause to be thus affected; I come a happy messenger of joyful news to you.

Lord Med. Joyful, do you say! that would indeed surprise me.

Lady Med. Mrs. Knightly is in my chamber, my lord. We have had a long conversation. She has

told me the strange event which this day has unfolded, and begs to speak with you—shall I bring her in?

Lord Med. Ay, pray do, my dear. [*Exit L.* Med.

Col. Med. Reassume your spirits, my lord; I dare promise you a happy issue to this affair.

Lord Med. I own this unexpected visit from Mrs. Knightly has a little revived me; and the generous frankness with which she has communicated the secret to my wife, shews she has a noble and enlarged mind.

Enter Lady MEDWAY, *and Mrs.* KNIGHTLY.

Mrs. Knight. My lord, I thought to have found you alone. I cannot, without confusion, look up to Colonel Medway.

Lord Med. You, madam, have no cause; but, if my son's presence creates in you any uneasiness, he shall withdraw.

Mrs. Knight. He need not, my lord; for as he is materially concerned in what I have to say, it is fit he should be present at my explanation. I presume, sir, you are by this time no stranger to my story.

Col. Med. I think myself happy, madam, in finding I have so near and tender a claim to your regard.

Mrs. Knight. I hope to give you one still nearer, sir. I will not now apologize for the means by which I came at the knowledge of that mutual love which I find there is between my sister and you.

Lady Med. It needs no excuse, madam; it was a

happy event, as it gave my lord the opportunity of making a discovery so fortunate for us all.

Mrs. Knight. My lord, I owe my sister a large amends for the distress I have occasioned her on more accounts than one; and you, in your turn, I think, should recompence your son for the sacrifice he was willing to make to you. Has he your permission to make Clara his bride?

Col. Med. Oh, madam, you are too, too good.

Mrs. Knight. You have but little reason, sir, to say so yet. My lord, the colonel's love for my sister ensures his happiness, and, to render her acceptable to you, I am ready to share half my fortune with her.

Lord Med. Oh, Medway, what an exalted mind is here!

Lady Med. My dear, do not keep your son suspended; he seems to check the transports that I see rising in his heart, till he has his father's sanction to his love.

Lord Med. Take, take your Clara from this excellent creature's hand, and may you both be blessed!

Mrs. Knight. No thanks, colonel—[*The Colonel advances to Mrs.* Knightly.]—restrain your raptures till you see my sister. I have sent to desire her company here——And now, my lord, I hope I have, by this one act of justice (for it is no more) made happy the nearest and dearest relations I have on earth.

Lord Med. Son! Lady Medway! help me to praise and to acknowledge, as I ought, such unexampled goodness!

Lady Med. Oh, my dear, I want words——Medway's gratitude, you see, has stopt his utterance.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Miss Richly, madam, is below.

Mrs. Knight. My lord, and Lady Medway, will you let me have the pleasure of presenting the colonel to my sister without any other witness?

Lord and Lady Med. By all means.

Col. Med. You, madam, have the best right to dispose of me.

Mrs. Knight. Come, sir.

[*She gives him her hand, and he leads her out.*

Lord Med. Oh, Lady Medway, I have not merited the benefits which are thus showered down upon me. ——But it is your goodness, yours and my children's virtue, have been the care of Providence, and I am blessed but for your sakes. Yet, my dear, I have the satisfaction to assure you, that what has passed this morning, joined to some other late incidents, has so thoroughly awakened reflection in me, that from this day forward you will find me a new man.

Lady Med. My lord, if you are sensible of any thing in your conduct that you would wish to rectify, I rejoice that you have taken your resolutions from the feelings of your own heart; for it would grieve me if I thought I had even by a look reproached you.

Lord Med. You never did, madam; I acknowledge you have been the best of wives; 'tis time now that

I should in my turn study to deserve that constant and tender regard for you, which I have hitherto but too much slighted. And now, best of women, receive my hand a second time; and with it an assurance, which I could never make before, that you possess my heart intire. [*They embrace.*

Lady Med. Oh, my dear, I was never truly happy till this instant.

Lord Med. You'll find my conduct as perfectly reformed as your heart can wish; assure yourself you will.

Lady Med. Pray, my dear, no more—you are now every thing that I would have you to be. I have but one wish left, which, could it be accomplished, would render me completely happy——Poor Louisa!

Lord Med. I understand you, my dear—I hear young Branville is returned.

Lady Med. He is, my lord; he arrived last night—I do not presume to mention him; but indeed she cannot be happy with Sir Anthony.

Lord Med. I would willingly gratify you in every thing; but how can I acquit myself with honour to Sir Anthony? You know he has my promise.

Lady Med. I know it, my dear; yet I am sure he is still so much in Mrs. Knightly's power, that with her assistance, I make no doubt but you could be easily disengaged from it.

Lord Med. If that could be done——

Lady Med. We shall certainly have a visit from him presently; suppose, my lord, Mrs. Knightly were to

try her influence on him when they meet, it will be a good opportunity——

Lord Med. Well, my dear,——you shall take your own way.

Enter Colonel MEDWAY, *Mrs.* KNIGHTLY, *Miss* RICHLY, *and* LOUISA; *while Lord* Medway *and the Colonel talk apart. Mrs.* Knightly *presents her sister to Lady* Medway.

Mrs. Knight. Madam, receive a sister from my hands.

Miss Rich. Oh, sister, my obligations to you——

Mrs. Knight. No more, sister; I have but acquitted myself of a duty——

Lady Med. Louisa, I have been petitioning for you once more; my lord has yielded, if he can with honour get off from his word with Sir Anthony. Dear Mrs. Knightly, with a little of your help, I am sure it could easily be done.

Mrs. Knight. Madam you may command me in any thing.

Lou. Oh, madam, a word from you, nay, a kind look, would, I am sure, recal your fugitive lover.

Mrs. Knight. I have not the vanity to think so; but since it will be agreeable to you, I'll try if I have still any interest in him.

Lady Med. This is about his time of visiting us. What if you were to try the experiment here?

Mrs. Knight. To oblige you, ladies—thus much I must tell you, I never mean to marry again; but I

know it will content Sir Anthony barely to be restored to my good graces.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Sir Anthony Branville is below, my lord!

Lord Med. I'll wait on him.

Lady Med. Dear my lord, suffer him to be conducted in here.

Mrs. Knight. My lord, I have a design of stealing him from Miss Medway, I assure you.

Lord Med. Oh, I see you have been plotting—Desire Sir Anthony to walk up——Louisa, on this joyful day I must not suffer you to wear a look of discontent—You owe all to this lady, and the best of mothers.

Lady Med. Louisa, you had best retire. [*Exit* Louisa.

Enter Sir ANTHONY, *bows low to Lord and Lady* Medway, *then looks round with surprise.*

Sir A. Bran. My lord, I thought my eyes would have been blessed with the sight of my fair mistress.

Mrs. Knight. Then I find it is all over. [*Half aside.*] What, Sir Anthony, not a look! Have you quite forgot me?

Sir A. Bran. Ah, madam, that inquiry comes a little of the latest, I do assure you.

Mrs. Knight. I am sorry for it, Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, I hope your lordship is of opinion that I do not deviate from that fidelity which I owe your excellent daughter, in entering into conference with this lady.

Lord Med. By no means, sir.

Sir A. Bran. I flatter myself I am indulged with your ladyship's favourable construction on the same occasion.

Lady Med. Without doubt, Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. Colonel, I would entreat the favour of being uncensured by you likewise.

Col. Med. Oh, Sir Anthony, the laws of good-breeding are not to be dispensed with.

Mrs. Knight. Sir Anthony, I am glad of the opportunity of asking your pardon, in presence of this worthy family, for any part of my behaviour which you may have taken amiss.

Sir A. Bran. Madam, I am not worthy of so great a concession; would to heaven there had never been any occasion given for it!

Mrs. Knight. I wish so too, Sir Anthony; but I find my repentance comes too late.

Sir A. Bran. Repentance! heavens, madam, do you condescend to feel any compunction on the occasion?

Mrs. Knight. I do indeed, Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. Then, madam, I apprehend it will not be so adviseable for me to abide within the reach of your influence; I think I cannot do a wiser thing than to stop my ears against your allurements.

Mrs. Knight. Not till you have first heard me, dear Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. Dear Sir Anthony! [*Aside.*] I had best depart, Lady Medway.

Lady Med. No, pray stay, good Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. There is a great peril in it, I assure your ladyship.

Col. Med. I thought your love for my sister, Sir Anthony, would be a sufficient guard against your relapsing.

Sir A. Bran. Her charms, colonel, I am ready to acknowledge should be an armour of proof; but give me leave to tell you, if there be a vulnerable part about me, this sorceress (craving her pardon for the expression) will certainly find it out.

Mrs. Knight. Sir Anthony, I confess I have been to blame in trifling with a man of your worth; yet I own I did not think you would have taken my little capricious coyness for an absolute refusal of your addresses.

Sir A. Bran. Madam, madam, take care; I am but a man; though I hope not without fortitude to sustain those trials of my virtue and my patience.

Mrs. Knight. 'Tis I, Sir Anthony, who have most need of fortitude——but go, ungrateful as you are.

Sir A. Bran. Do you hear that, my lord? Before Heaven, there never was such an enchantress since the days of Armida.

Lord Med. I am surprised, I confess, Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. Well you may, my lord—she is hung round with spells——I do aver it to you I am rooted here; I have not power to stir, my lord.

Col. Med. Bless me, Sir Anthony, that's very strange.

Sir A. Bran. [*Walks about.*] I use the word but metaphorically, colonel; I have not absolutely lost the use of my limbs, thank Heaven.

Lord Med. Then, Sir Anthony, you had better retire, before it be too late.

Mrs. Knight. Ay do, and carry that love, which was my right, to Miss Medway; but let me tell you, sir, as a punishment for your inconstancy, that her heart is already given away to another.

Sir A. Bran. 'Tis unlawful in you, madam, to slander an innocent lady's reputation.

Mrs. Knight. I speak nothing but the truth, Sir Anthony; and what is more, I know your nephew Branville is the man, and that she is equally beloved by him.

Sir A. Bran. My nephew Branville! oh, heavens, madam, what do you tell me! my lord! my Lady Medway! may I believe what this incomprehensible fair one says?

Lady Med. Sir Anthony, I must own that I believe there is an affection between your nephew, and my daughter.

Sir A. Bran. I am thunder-struck—petrified—converted into stone.

Lady Med. I think, Sir Anthony, there is nothing so extraordinary in the circumstance.

Sir A. Bran. Madam, there is such a degree of impurity, in the bare imagination of a nuptial so circumstanced, as has, I assure you, totally subverted my whole system.

Col. Med. I am sorry, Sir Anthony, you were not informed of this sooner.

Sir A. Bran. Sir, 'tis not too late to prevent my honour from being stained.

Lord Med. You must judge for yousself in this case, Sir Anthony.

Sir A. Bran. My lord, passionately as I admire the lady, I would suffer martyrdom, rather than solemnize a marriage under such inauspicious influence.

Col. Med. Sir Anthony, you are not pressed to do it.

Sir A. Bran. [*Apart to the Colonel.*] Colonel, I am not a man of a sanguinary spirit, but if such a measure is deemed necessary—I am at your service either afoot or on horseback—you understand me.

Col. Med. There is no occasion, I assure you, sir.

Sir A. Bran. I am ready—that's all—my alacrity is pretty notorious on those occasions.

Col. Med. For my part I approve of your punctilio intirely.

Sir A. Bran. I am proud of your approbation; my lord, I hope I am honoured with yours, in giving up my pretensions to the fair lady, your daughter.

Lord Med. Sir, you have my free consent.

Mrs. Knight. Then, Sir Anthony, I am sure you have too much generosity not to promote your nephew's happiness, if my lord is willing——

Lord Med. I have no objection to Mr. Branville, madam,—but Sir Anthony knows my inability to give my daughter a fortune equal to her rank—

Mrs. Knight. Oh, my lord, I am sure Sir Anthony is too noble to let the sordid consideration of money be a bar to the happiness of two faithful lovers—

Sir A. Bran. On the contrary, madam, I am charmed that my nephew has such an opportunity of shewing the generosity inherent in the family of the Branvilles, by contemning riches, in comparison of beauty.

Col. Med. Indeed, Sir Anthony, he deserves all your affection; for though I know he dotes on my sister, yet hearing that you addressed her, he resolved to give her up.

Mrs. Knight. Generous young man!

Sir A. Bran. Ah, ladies, see what delight the little sportive god takes in persecuting us true lovers!—My lord, if my nephew has your consent, I assure you, I will render him in point of fortune, worthy of the lady of his heart.

Lord Med. Sir, after an instance of such generosity, your alliance must be doubly acceptable to me.

Mrs. Knight. And now, Sir Anthony, I hope you will return to your lawful sovereign.

Sir A. Bran. Arbitress of my fate, thus I reassume my happy bondage——

[*He kneels, and takes Mrs.* Knightly's *hand.*

Enter Sir HARRY *and Lady* FLUTTER.

Sir H. Flut. What the deuce is all this! my uncle in heroics at my widow's feet! every thing's topsy-turvy, I think—My lord! Lady Medway! an explanation quickly, for Heaven's sake! Miss Medway

gave us a hint of some strange things that were going forward here——What are you all about?

Lady Flut. Dear Mrs. Knightly, I absolutely die with curiosity!

Sir H. Flut. My dear, that's a disease that will never kill you, for you have been wonderfully subject to it ever since you and I were acquainted.

Lady Flut. Pr'ythee, Sir Harry, let your tongue keep pace with your wit, and then you will not talk so fast.—Tell me, do, Mrs. Knightly.

Sir H. Flut. No, don't, Mrs. Knightly—My dear, you really put me in mind of the cat in the fable, who was metamorphosed into a fine lady; but upon the first temptation—slap—egad she was a cat again.

Lady Flut. And you put me in mind——

Lady Med. Take care, my dear, take care.

[*Draws her aside.*

Lord Med. Beware of a relapse, Lady Flutter, you are now happy if you are inclined to continue so.

[*Aside to her.*

Lady Flut. So, my lord! who has metamorphosed you, pray?

Lord Med. Lady Medway.

Mrs. Knight. My dear Lady Flutter, you shall know all at another opportunity. For the present, I am sure it will give you pleasure to wish the colonel and my sister joy on their happy union, to which my lord has consented. You are to congratulate Miss Medway too on her approaching nuptials with Mr. Branville.——

Sir A. Bran. And you are to felicitate me, niece Flutter, on being permitted the transcendent happiness of once more basking in the sunshine of this lady's favour.

Lord Med. And you are all to congratulate me, upon a double occasion; first, on that of being perfectly blessed in domestic joys; and next, that of seeing me a thoroughly reformed man.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

WHAT strange odd maggots fill an author's pate!
A female court of justice—rare conceit!
Ladies, I give you joy of your new stations,
I think you've had *a trial—of your patience.*
What, five long acts, and not one pleasant sally!
But grave Sir Anthony's attempt to rally——
No sprightly rendezvous, no pretty fellows,
No wife intriguing, nor no husband jealous!
If to such innovations you submit,
And swallow tame morality for wit;
If such dull rules you let a woman teach,
Her next attempt, perhaps, will be to—preach.
I told her (for it vexed me to the heart)
Madam——excuse me——I don't like my part——
'Tis out of nature—never drawn from life,
Who ever heard of such a passive wife?
To bear so much—'tis not in flesh and blood—
Such females might have liv'd before the flood.
But now the character will seem so flat,
Give me *threats, tears, hysterics, and all that—*
If this don't work upon my lord, I hope
You'll so contrive the plot—I may elope.
Take my advice, I think I know the town,
Without such aids your Piece will scarce go down.

Hold, friend, she cry'd—I think I've hit the way
To reconcile both sexes to the play;
For, while the prologue bids our own be sov'reign,
The scenes instruct the other how to govern.
A harmless plot—with credit to dismiss
The Piece—you know the ladies never hiss.
And though they should condemn it, yet the men sure
Will leave a woman's faults to women's censure.
They, prone to meekness, charity, and love,
Are always silent where they cann't approve.
But if at loud applause we dare to aim,
It is the men must ratify our claim.

THE END.

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Sheridan, Frances Chamberlaine,

The discovery

London 1792

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